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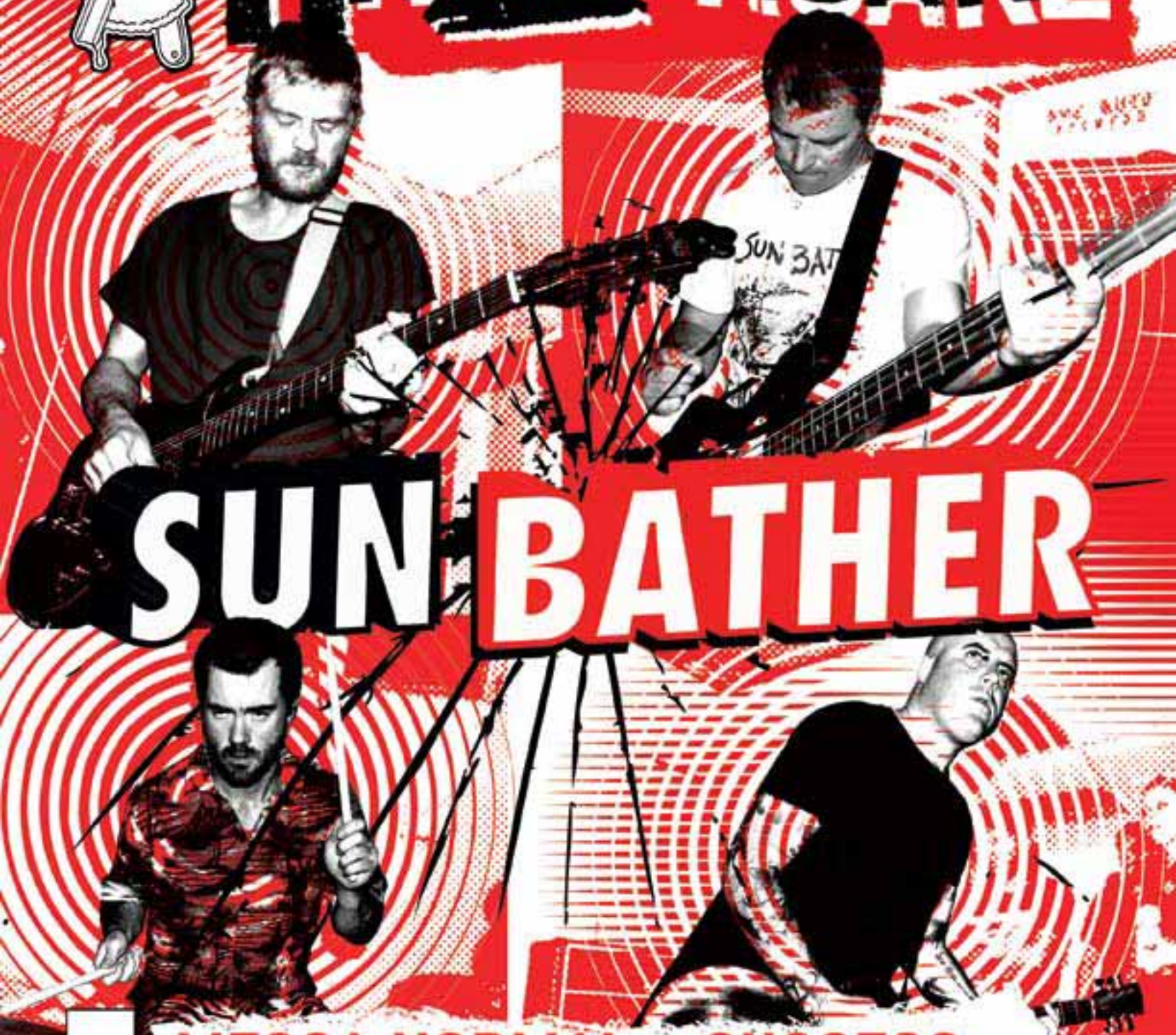

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If you can, please consider making a donation this year. We really do appreciate it! –Daryl

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• You can also watch our donation video to see our gifts:
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QUESTIONS? Email todd@razorcake.org

Hey you there!

Hope 2016 has treated you well! At Razorcake we feel pretty lucky to still be doing what we do another year later.

That is why we're approaching everyone who reads Razorcake and asking you to consider making a tax-deductible donation.

Every donation helps us continue doing what we do. We enjoy being a part of things we believe in that are also bigger than ourselves.

Hope to hear back from you.

Sincerest thanks,
–Todd Taylor

Please check out the gifts we're offering until January 1st, 2017.

GIFTS

In gratitude for this year's donations we're offering the following gifts:

• **$10** and above, a donation-only sticker designed by Art Fuentes.

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It Takes Everything

Rene: "Dude, that girl totally fucked up. She can't wear that dress. Doesn't she know she's stealing Todd's thunder?"

Janeth: "I think that's Todd."

It was a success before it officially started. The night prior to the party, the house was full. The kitchen table buzzed with conversation between some of my favorite people from across the country. I had invited all worldwide Razorcake contributors and their special guests to HQ to celebrate our fifteenth anniversary.

Luckily, there's a big backyard.

Growing up, I shied away from ceremonies. I am part socially awkward, part quiet, steadily becoming more averse to any sort of spotlight. Any situation that presents a plaque or fancy hand lettering on a piece of paper with a signature is not my jam. I enjoy making and doing, not the pomp. I'm most comfortable being almost invisible, a ghost unrecognized. Most often, the ceremonies I've attended are for people in the audience. I love my parents and I did it mostly for them. Which is more than okay. I'm thankful they have the memories of my graduations and am grateful for their support.

Razorcake has slowly, steadily grown since it started in January 2001. I'm currently the conduit for 184 volunteers. I'm the only person who almost everyone is in regular contact with. I feel like one of those old telephone switchboard operators, pulling lines and plugging sockets, making connections between people.

Hey, math genius. It's 2016. Shouldn't this be Razorcake's sixteenth anniversary?

Yes, but a Sweet Sixteen sounded lame.

Sixteen years ago, thanks to the guidance of local ELA native Jimmy Alvarado, Razorcake started in a largely ignored (by honky motherfuckers and rich douches) neighborhood that was affordable. It's a majority Latino, working class neighborhood. I felt instantly comfortable in it, aside from the cock fighting next door.

A quinceañera is a celebration of a girl becoming a young woman. I became that young woman for an evening. A princess. Fabulous magenta dress (thanks going-out-of-business lady who didn't blink when I told her it was for me and I had my measurements ready). Fetching makeup, wig, and tiara (thanks Ever and Maggie). My dressing up worked so well that good friends didn't recognize me after saying their names several times, them scanning me, and it not initially registering it was me until they gave me the big, wobbly eyed, jaw-dropping cartoon response of "No fucking way."

The Quince satisfied my three criteria: no cops, no hospital-level injuries, no assholes. But most of all, what I'll remember years from now, is why I threw the party in the first place: the people who share in making Razorcake. The Quince was just a handy excuse to get everyone together, to put faces to names. To ceremonially put time aside to celebrate, pause, and not let the moment slip by unmarked. I know it's a cliché that's been hijacked, but we have families of blood and families by choice. Razorcake is my family by choice. It was our first-ever reunion. We won't wait as long for the next one.

RZC por vida.

–Todd Taylor

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We are the daughters and the sons /
We are the second hand trousers /
Blazers and blouses /
Irredeemable ones.

–Martha
"St Paul's (Westerberg Comprehensive)"

Peeber
(2007-2016)
Photo by Ben Snakepit

THANK YOU: ***Sometimes it's fun saying shit like, "Dangerhouse" as a response to "What direction do you want to cover to go in?" And he nails it, thanks to Jessee Zeroxed for the Sun Bather cover; Halloween: America's national holiday? Hey, at least it's not in celebration of a genocide thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in Donna's column; I really didn't think how much it'd cost to fill up those big RZC balloons but this picture redeems my thrifty ways thanks to Jim for his picture in his column; It's a part I. There's a black cloud quickly approaching. How do you think it'll end? thanks to Steve Larder for his illo. in Cassie's column; One of the limitations of print zines: I wish this was a full-sized pull-out poster glued in right there thanks to Alex Barrett for his musical lucha libre illo. in Nørb's column; That's the piñata Kayla Greet punched later. Feels weird to thank myself for the photo, so I won't do it; It's harder to spray paint flowers than concrete thanks to Simon Sotelo for her illo. in Bianca's column; Blob or melted Rhythm Chicken snowchicken? Who knows? thanks to Eric Baskauskas for his illo. in the Chicken's column; It would be really cool if cats—actual cats—toured as bands, wore hoodies, and sold merch thanks to Nation of Amanda for her illo. in J.V.'s column; Nardwuar and Mitch Clem go together like strawberries inside of a plastic horse. Thanks, for the illo., Mitch; Fucking Christ, this one's a hard sell thanks to Kurt Morris and Steve Thueson for the One Punk's Guide to Christian Punk article and illos.; Home Depot's messed with this lady's schedule in the garden department, but her time at Curves was rewarding. Honesty in punk comes with unexpected truths thanks to David Ensminger, Jeff Smith, Judith Baumann, Sean Raggett, and Lauren Measure for the Jean Smith interview, photos, and layout; A bunch of baby-punching, giving-babies-cigarettes, defenders of Disneyland thanks to Griffin Wynne and Matt Average for the Sun Bather transcription, photos, and layout; Start with "Swingtown" and end with "Wild Mountain Honey," thanks to Kayla Greet, Julie A. Ferguson, Patrick Houdek, Paul Silver, and Becky Bennett for the Success interview, photos, and layout.***

"Sort of like a DQ Blizzard made with sex and pus and killing instead of Reese's Pieces®." –Rev. Nørb, M.O.T.O., *Motoerectus* LP. *Quality musical journalism you won't find elsewhere. You're welcome. Thanks to 95's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Nicole X, Tricia Ramos, Jim Joyce, Bryan Static, Matt Average, Matt Werts, Sal Lucci, Keith Rosson, Sean Arenas, Paul J. Comeau, Lisa Weiss, Art Ettinger, Indiana Laub, Chris Terry, Mike Frame, Kurt Morris, Mark Twistworthy, Ryan Nichols, Kayla Greet, MP Johnson, Ty Stranglehold, Simone Carter, Tim Brooks, Rich Cocksedge, Lyle, Jon Mule, Nørb, Billups Allen, Camylle Reynolds, Sean Koepenick, Matt Seward, Vincent, Kelley O'Death, Candace Hansen, Jimmy Alvarado, Steve Adamyk, Cynthia Pinedo, Ian Wise, Chad Williams, Michael T. Fournier, Garrett Barnwell, Jim Woster, and Adrian Salas.*

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This issue is dedicated to the marriage of Liz Prince and Kyle Folsom

The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:
Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Rishbha Bhagi, Chris Baxter, Steve Couch, Megan Pants, Phill Legault, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Jimmy Alvarado, Josh Rosa, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, Alice Bag, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Dance Dance Dance" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Nighthawk, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Kevin Dunn, Maggie Egan, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Michael T. Fournier, Samantha McBride, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Jon Mule, Chris Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Jackie Rusted, Rosie Gonce, Alex Cady, Aaron Zonka, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Pete Stapleton, Rachel Gouk, Alex Harris, Rodrigo V., Jack Fallows, Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Ollie Mikse, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Paul Silver, Julie A. Ferguson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, David Ensminger, Danny Rust, Adel Souto, Griffin Wynne, Clara Acosta, Dolly Chavez, Jamie L. Rotante, Daisy Noemi, George Lopez, Christine Arguello, and Natalye Childress.

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This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs and is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission.

Start yelling and don't stop until you feel better.

The Confidence List

It wasn't until after crying every other day for the past two weeks, it occurred to me I was a twelve-year failure. Since graduating college with my first degree (in journalism) in December of 2004, I have spent the better part of the last twelve years applying for jobs that would flourish into my dream career. During those twelve years I earned another college degree (in art history), started (and then closed) my own business, taken many different and exciting internships, made a bunch of money at a bunch of different jobs, and moved over six hundred miles from home to accomplish more than ever. Yet, I don't count any of these as successes because I haven't snagged that magical museum-based career I've been imagining.

I was crying because I've been actively applying for different jobs that fit within my career path since January and have only received one call back, which fell flat. There is something so goddamned soul crushing about looking for a job. Summarizing who you are and how hard you've worked over the course of your entire life on a single piece of paper is not fair. Follow that up with a couple paragraphs about why you're the best person to ever apply for what is generally an underpaid position without benefits, and it's a recipe for sadness. Then I woke up and realized it doesn't have to be.

Summarizing who you are and how hard you've worked over the course of your entire life on a single piece of paper is not fair.

And it's a recipe for sadness.

I haven't given up yet, but my ego has been skinned of a lot of its confidence after all these years. I need to learn to build it back up and use it to get that perfect job. In an effort to feel less like shit, I've written up a "Confidence List" I use to prevent myself from wallowing in my perceived failures and instead recognize my successes. Think of it as a numbered posi jump for your brain (it would be my "PMA list" if it weren't for Bad Brains being homophobic dicks). I wanted to pass it along to everyone else currently experiencing any stupid bullshit, because we all deserve a little more confidence.

1. Complain loudly.

The reason I have something so obnoxious and obvious as my number one thing to do is because I don't vent. My mom is a complainer and I have always hated it, so I never complained about anything. Now, I rarely even think to express myself when I'm upset and it only makes things worse. Complaining has a bad rap and complainers are labeled as annoying, but getting out that pent-up frustration is important. Call your best friend and ask, "Can I just vent for a bit?" Then start yelling about how stupid and unjust everything is. Ideally, take those complaints to a therapist. I started seeing one and can't believe how much it has changed my thinking patterns. This is a professional who knows the best way to get you feeling better. Honestly, spending thousands on a college degree but only being able to get a retail job is incredibly fucked up, so start yelling and don't stop until you feel better.

2. Exercise well, eat well, sleep well.

The first thing to go when I'm stressed out or upset is my health. I don't exercise because I don't feel like moving. I eat garbage food in an effort to comfort myself. And I sleep poorly because when everything is dark and quiet, all I can think about is how big a failure I am. Making sure I do YouTube yoga, run up the hill I live on, or just do as many sit ups as I can keeps me full of endorphins and happier. Or you could not be as cheap as I am and go to a gym, I suppose. Eating well fills me with happy vitamins and I don't get fatter (and subsequently sadder). Sleeping well makes me feel less like a decaying garbage heap and that's real nice, too. Healthy body makes for a healthy brain.

3. Don't get isolated.

Having moved to a new city several years ago, I haven't made many friends and my current data entry job doesn't allow talking while I type. It's incredibly easy for me to not interact with anyone for days and eventually I wither like a cut flower. Getting out and meeting people keeps me positive. Volunteering in the field I want to get into always helps. Taking community classes. Even a local online job search group helps. Social groups help make the world seem less stupid when job hunting makes it seem unbelievably awful. Besides, nothing beats some solid friends when you're feeling down.

4. Don't fortune tell.

I can get really upset and bitter when I make up reasons why I didn't get a job or an interview. I fill my mind with bullshit I made up about why someone might throw away my resume. I go back and forth over putting "fluent in Arabic" anywhere, depending on how racist I believe the eyes on the other side might be. If a friend says they'll help me get a job somewhere and nothing comes of it, I start wondering if they didn't want me as a co-worker. I always assume the worst, which is defeating and pointless. "The worst" is never the most obvious reason why I didn't get a job. Sometimes the nephew of the owner gets that position. Or someone already there ends up getting promoted. Or someone with ten years of experience fills the position. Sometimes it's just dumb luck. Nearly every single time, it had nothing to do with me. My

BILL PINKEL

perception puts me at the center of everything, when, in reality, I'm just another not-Waldo in the pages of life's *Where's Waldo?* book. Thing is, none of us are Waldo, and that's perfectly okay.

5. Count each little success.

It's so easy to focus on the big emptiness of an unachieved goal. Instead, take note of little successes. Write down how many emails you sent. Congratulate yourself on that interview you got. Be proud that you had a friend rooting for you at a place you want to work. When there isn't a current success, do small chores or projects. Weed the garden or re-caulk the bathtub. Feel in control of something and see the positive benefits of your labor. Then remember all your huge successes too—like earning a college degree, paying off debt, getting a house, or not dying before now.

6. Treat Yo' Self.

Get a massage, use a bath bomb, paint your nails, buy that candleholder shaped like a human hand. Treating yourself well and feeling good are undeniably important but these are the first things I stop doing when I'm stressed. Which doesn't make sense, since little rewards always help melt away the stress. Finding a weird twenty-year-old mug with a haunted house on it at the thrift store is a fifty-cent confidence boost that reminds me I'm deserving of good things.

Of course this isn't some universal list; these are just the major things that keep my pillow from soaking in my salty tears. Big life hurdles, like struggling to start a career, are daunting and scary and so incredibly difficult—but goddamn it—I'm *doing* it. Just actively working to achieve my goals is a success in itself. So I'm not going to cry over being a twelve-year failure anymore. I'm going to take a long bath in my re-caulked tub, eat a healthy dinner I just made, do some yoga in my underwear thanks to YouTube, and then call my best friend and start screaming.

Except this time I'm screaming because I got a call back today and an interview for the day after tomorrow.

My confidence is covered, but I could use some luck if you got any.

–Donna Ramone

Refusal to quit is in RZC's DNA.

On Not Being a Quitter

Celebrating fifteen years of getting shit done.

I'm sitting on a train, the Surfliner to be precise, southbound to San Diego. I just spent an amazing weekend at Razorcake headquarters celebrating the fifteenth anniversary of the magazine you're holding in your hands.

For this august occasion, Todd Taylor threw a Quinceañera, a Mexican tradition held on a young woman's fifteenth birthday to celebrate her entry into womanhood. On the surface, it's the equivalent of a sweet sixteen party. Some families get caught up in the ostentatious displays of wealth in the form of extravagant gowns, parties, and gifts. Other families are more modest. Todd's Quinceañera was somewhere in the middle. It certainly wasn't modest.

About 150 people gathered at HQ for the event. My wife, Nuvia, and I drove up from San Diego. Her birthday was the day before so we spent the morning with her parents, nieces, and siblings at her childhood home in Paramount in south L.A. before heading to the party, which called for formal dress. The degree of formality was open to the guest. I wore a suit with oxblood Docs, suspenders, and a bow tie. Nuvia wore a dress and chose a tiara that matched her newly dyed purple hair.

The reason for this formality soon became apparent: Todd, the host, was dressed in a magenta gown, dark wig, and pink lipstick with matching nails. It was not the first time I'd seen Todd dress as a woman.

When we were roommates during grad school, Todd and I were invited to do a reading at an art space in Flagstaff, Ariz. We both wore wigs, but I tucked mine under a baseball cap so that I looked like a surfer who sold drugs out of a gas station. Todd went full drag. Make-up, tight-fitting dress, the works. We both had bottles of malt liquor we brought up on the stage with us. I read a story lifted from a children's book with some substantial changes. At the end of the story, instead of young Bobby learning a valuable lesson, he was repeatedly violated. It was the only time I ever read the story and I hope those who heard have forgiven me for it.

Todd's story that evening was somehow more disturbing. Disturbing stories were Todd's forte. He had a knack for writing things that upset our classmates and occasionally our instructors. Maybe you didn't know this about Todd, but in those days he was a formidably prolific painter whose style I'd characterize as Ralph Steadman meets Francis Bacon. It was both vivid and visceral. One of my favorite pieces featured Jesus of Nazareth sitting in a car during a brutal rush hour logjam with one hand nailed to the steering wheel while the other held a burning cigarette and a beer.

Todd's stories were just as graphic. After the reading that night, we discovered that the director of the composition program, i.e. our boss, was in the audience. I asked him, "Do we still have jobs?" He said, "You do, Jim, but Todd and I need to talk."

He was kinda joking, kinda not. Todd had that energy about him. If he was going to do something, he was going to do it all the way. He wasn't just going to talk about dressing up for a performance. He was going to do it and he didn't ask for permission or worry if everyone was going to be okay with it. He went for it.

That's how Todd approached Razorcake in the early days, and that's how he approaches it today. That's how he approaches everything, which I think is a good thing. If he's going to ask for your help doing something, he's not going to waste your time. You can depend on him one hundred percent.

In the early 1990s, long before the internet and mobile phones became popular, Todd and I decided to meet up in Spain. I was attending a conference at the University of Seville and knew there would be a message board where people could leave notes for each other. So we agreed to use the board to communicate our travel plans. Even though neither of us had ever been to Spain, much less Seville, our plan worked. So we did it again the following week, only this time we picked a roundabout on a map on the island of Gibraltar. That worked, too, and we went on to have a gloriously terrible, terrifically dangerous adventure in Morocco, which for security reasons I can't discuss here.

When I tell the story of how we managed these international meet-ups, people don't really believe me—unless they know Todd. Then it makes sense. If Todd tells you he's going to meet you for tacos, pick you up at the airport, or be waiting under the Eifel Tower on New Year's Eve, you better believe Todd will be there. And until very recently, he did it without the aid of a smart phone. He was getting ready to take a trip last year and his binder was full of highlighted maps for places he wanted to go that he'd printed out days, if not weeks, in advance. That's Todd in a nutshell.

Todd is equal parts reliable and stubborn. Being reliable is good when you're doing things you want to do, but being a bit donkey headed is an asset when you get to the part that is difficult, tiresome, and dull—the part you didn't realize you'd signed up for, the part that is the opposite of fun. That's when it helps to be stubborn. That's when you want Todd in your corner. In this regard, Todd is my mentor and role model. In grad school I was a compulsive procrastinator. I'm not any more (said the man writing this column less than twenty-four hours before it's due).

One thing I've always admired about Todd is he doesn't know the meaning of the word quit. Another example. When we lived together in North Hollywood, we used to have a roommate who liked to wrestle. He loved wrestling because he was good at it and he was a bit of a knucklehead who had broken both of his hands in fights, so wrestling was his go-to move. When he felt the need to assert his dominance, he would goad his friends into wrestling with him. I made this mistake a few times, usually while excessively inebriated, and he made short work out of me. I was happy to yield to his dominance if it meant we could get back to drinking.

One night he taunted Todd one time too many and soon they were grappling on the floor. Our friend was faster, stronger, leaner, and longer. He had every advantage save one: Todd's will. No matter what situation he found himself in, Todd refused to quit. The match went uncomfortably long. There was a lot of grunting and cursing as their bodies heaved across the carpet. Finally, our friend relented and the night resumed, but he told me later that he'd never wrestle with Todd again. "There's no quit in him."

The lesson here is clear: you can't win when your opponent refuses to quit. That refusal is in Razorcake's DNA. It's also why it was so gratifying to see so many people come together for the Quinceañera. Todd is one of my oldest friends. Of course I love him and appreciate what he does. We share the same values because we met at a time

JIM RULAND

Being reliable is good when you're doing things you want to do, but being a bit donkey headed is an asset when you get to the part that is difficult, tiresome, and dull.

when we were figuring those values out. What kind of person am I? What kind of person do I want to be?

Razorcake embodies all the best answers to those questions. Razorcake has many excellent champions—it dawns on me now as my train zips alongside the Pacific Ocean—because it reflects those values. Or maybe just the fact that it has values is enough in an age when so many of our pursuits are transitory, impermanent, and hinge on having the right upgrade.

The party was such a success not because we all like the same kind of music or come from similar backgrounds or all share some misanthropic outsider identity. We don't. But we share the belief that if something is worth doing, it's worth doing well and when you find something that embodies that idea you give what you can to keep it going without expecting anything in return. What I saw at the party was a gathering of people from all over North America who embrace those ideas and came to show its founder and figurehead some love.

That and a bunch of dudes wearing dresses.

And I have to say it was kind of astonishing to see Todd looking—I'm not going to say hot—but way better than he looked the last time he wore a dress over twenty years ago. The wig was a bit ratchet but his make-up was on point and his gown was fab. I should have paid closer attention to his shoes, but I have to go now. My train is pulling into the station and I have a column to write.

–Jim Ruland

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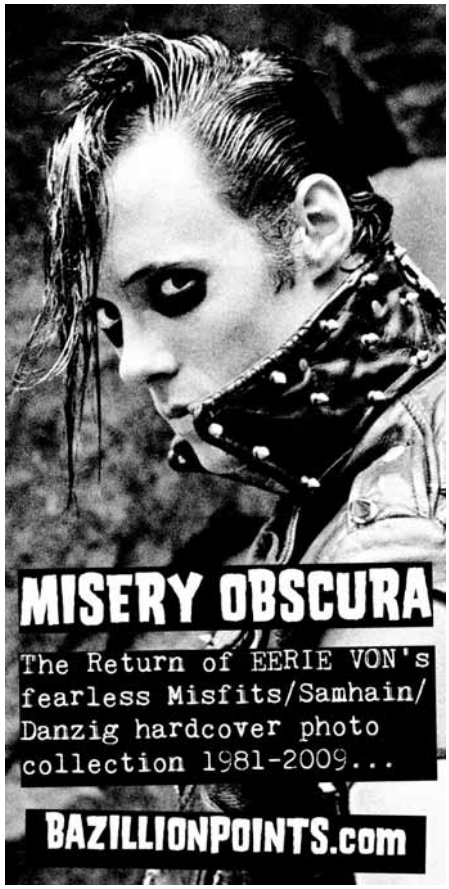

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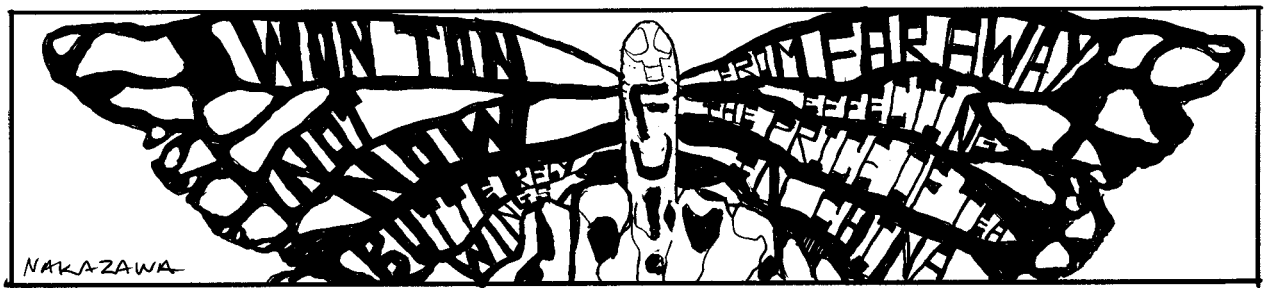

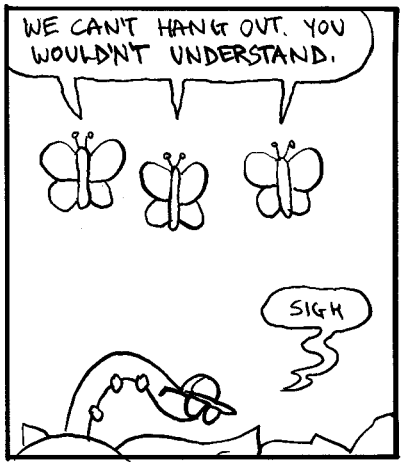

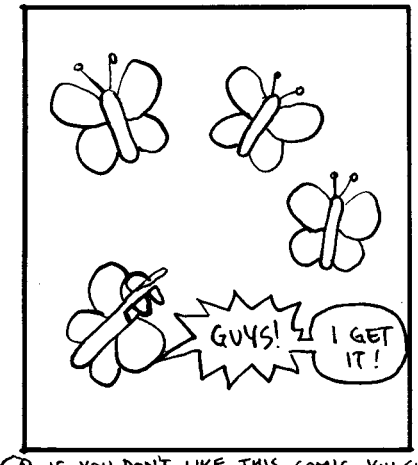

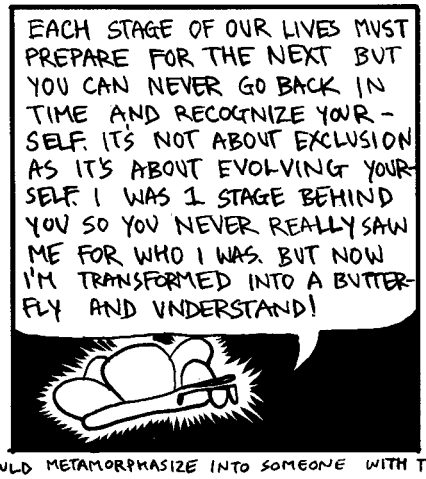

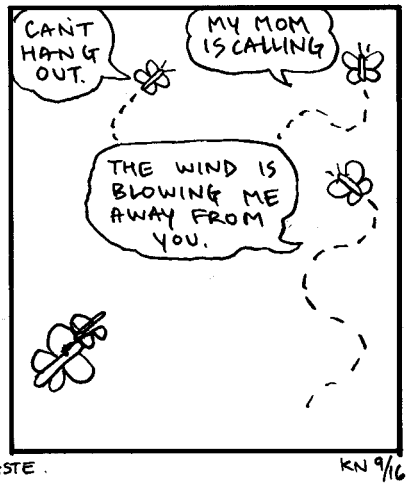

IF YOU DON'T LIKE THIS COMIC YOU SHOULD METAMORPHASIZE INTO SOMEONE WITH TASTE.

KN 9/16

I didn't eat meat, but I mostly ate garbage.

Deer Toyota (Part 1)

The greatest events in my life have all been marred by instance of great headache. Ever since I was a kid, any day preceded by any amount of anticipation has been met with unfathomable pain, the kind that shoots from your spine into your eyes and makes you forget that you want to live. Imagine waking up on Christmas morning when you are eight and throwing up from a migraine brought about by the jubilation of an impending gift of little plastic ponies. I had a headache every day of high school, 1,466 headaches, all from waiting for the Dwarves to put out a new album. When I am truly excited about something, my heart and brain take on the uncontrollable wiggle of a wiener dog hearing its people pull into the driveway, a self-inflicted shaken baby syndrome that has given me a migraine for every special occasion of my adult life. Throw in some insomnia, too much coffee, and a deadline, and it's the scene in the inspirational movie of the week where the kid gets to the finish line and collapses.

I can usually sense when a migraine is going to happen. I can feel it in my neck and my vision starts to blur, so I bust out the aspirin or whatever is around. Tylenol makes me feel like I'm dying. Vicodin makes me feel like I am in an episode of *Intervention* where I just sold my baby and I'm feeling remorseful and sorry for myself. Excedrin has caffeine in it so if you take too much it feels like a Waffle House waitress just spilled an entire pot of coffee on your liver. It was the only medication that had ever worked for me, up until it suddenly stopped working. But I'm getting to that.

I finished the comic I was working on about the Dwarves just in time to give it to them at a show 1,500 miles away the next day. It took until 9 PM on the night we were leaving, which coincidentally was the same day I was moving. I gave money to my old roommate for next month's electric bill, and Pug and I went to my job at the tutoring place to make copies. It was late and I was sure no one would be there. I could discreetly run off four hundred copies of this zine just like I had done with the comic before.

Hans, the office manager, was closing up as I let myself in. He stood in the doorway of the office with his hand on his hip. "What are you doing?"

I wracked my brain for a good lie, something that would allow me to make copies in a carefree, exhausted delirium. My brain choked and sputtered. I had nothing.

"I just finished this comic and I wanted to make four hundred copies."

"*You*!" he gasped. "It's been *you* all this time! Do you know how much trouble I got in for *you*?!"

"Look, I'm sorry, Hans, but I'm driving to Denver tonight to give this to the Dwarves. Do you want to be a part of the problem or part of the solution?"

Hans looked at me. His mouth hung open. "I'm your boss!"

"Hans, are you in or are you out?"

"I HIRED you!"

I looked at the machine, sacred green light blinking from the controls.

"That's just a formality. We're *friends* now, Hans. Friends let friends make copies."

It was a stand-off. Hans looked disgusted. I was starting to sweat.

"Look at me, Hans." I pointed to my sunken eyes, my haggard, sleep-deprived expression, my Bay City Rollers haircut. "Does it look like I can be stopped?"

We stared at each other. To my credit, I looked deranged. I *was* deranged. I no longer cared about my job. The Rock Monster had taken over, seized control of the Priorities Joystick in my brain, and downshifted. I cared only about making this comic come to life and handing it to my favorite band fifteen to eighteen hours from now.

"Forty," he said, angrily, like I had the winning hand at a very important game of Hold 'Em.

"Forty what?"

"Forty copies," he conceded.

"Fifty," I said.

"Forty." We were bargaining now. *Scrappy J.* was twenty-two pages, which would have been a fortune at the all-night Kinkos. There were no good copy scams in Austin. Most of the copy shops had updated machines, so this was the best I was going to get on such short notice. I handed the originals to Hans.

"Okay. Forty."

Pug was waiting in the back seat next to the saddle stapler when the copies were ready. I stuffed them in my backpack and Hans locked up. My trunk was still full of stuff from the move, so I put my bag on the floor and Pug moved up front. I started the car and pulled away. "Thanks, Hans!"

He walked to his hatchback. "If I get in trouble, you're fired."

"You're a good friend," I shouted out the window. "I'll always remember your act of kindness in my time of need!"

"Don't get killed on the way to Denver."

I picked up Laura first. The only things she brought with her were a bag of dried pineapples, a black wifebeater, and a clean pair of underwear. "Whoa!" she said. "You look like *shit*!"

"I've slept less than usual." I put the car in gear and started toward Jessica's. "On the bright side, the comic's done."

"Yesss! That is GREAT!" She fastened her seatbelt. "Wait, have you slept *at all*?"

"No. I'll sleep when I'm dead."

Jessica brought eight ears of corn, a thermos of black coffee, apples, fruit leather, a knife, clean clothes, and hiking boots.

"My god," I said, shaking my head once we were on I-35 North. "We are ready for *everything*."

The nighttime slowed into a blur. Long stretches of Texas with only our headlights and the moon. Train tracks running parallel to the highway. Roadkill. Shredded truck tires. Silhouettes of gas stations, boarded up and alone. Getting out to pee and thinking about snakes. Mentioning the *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and being told to shut up.

We were too excited to sleep. Jessica folded comics and Laura stapled them. Pug slept in the backseat, bored of the endless nighttime and the human who was always dragging him to these nowhere places, fast and with the windows open. We talked about stripping, about money, about each other and the things that kept us going—our writing, our drawing, ourselves. The sum totals of our lives. I had a dog, these two girls, and forty copies of something I made. I had enough money for gas, a car that still worked, and a city to go home to. I had a headache, but a lot to show for it. None of us asked for much, but we had what we needed.

We got lost, a wrong turn that took us three hours out of the way. We pulled off to look at a map. I have a habit of recalculating mileage in my head whenever I am bored or things feel like they are taking too long. I'm not good at math, but I'm the Rainman of breaking down driving distance into hours and minutes. If we were lucky, we'd make it to Denver with two hours to spare. That was just enough time to lay down, rub my temples, and consume something other than black coffee or road food. I took two Excedrin,

STEVE LARDER

None of us asked for much, but we had what we needed.

hoped they would do the trick, and drove off, crossed fingers gripping the wheel.

I switched places with Jessica some time in the late morning. We stopped to pee at an abandoned rest stop where the windows were busted out and there were dead birds near a caved-in section of the roof.

"My head is starting to hurt." I took three more Excedrin with a thermos lid of black coffee.

"Want to change it up? You've driven all night." Jessica peeled the husk from an ear of corn and ate it raw.

"Whoa! What are you doing with that corn?"

She looked at the corn. "What do you mean? I'm eating it."

"You can eat it raw like that?" Everything my mom cooked back home came in cans and was only distinguishable by color.

"Yeah, dude." She handed me an ear. "Try it. It's like road candy."

In Austin, I had only just begun to understand fruits and vegetables. Before that I was more of a cake-a-tarian. I didn't eat meat, but I mostly ate garbage. Only in the last year had I begun to eat food with any nutritional value or cook beyond microwaving.

I peeled back the corn foreskin and took a bite. It *did* taste like road candy.

"This is the best thing I have ever eaten," I said, spitting yellow corn particles like a whale filtering barnacles. I handed over the keys and laid down in the backseat next to the thermos. My eyes hurt, so I closed them and fell asleep. Jessica put a Dead Moon album and Laura drummed the dashboard….

–Cassie J. Sneider

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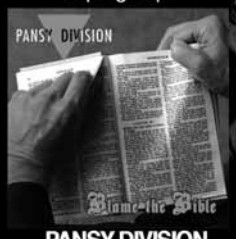

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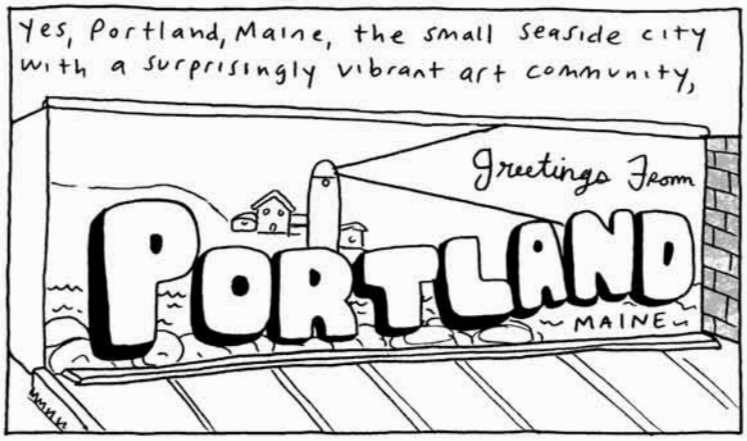

So lookout, Portland, Maine: We're coming for your pinball and ice cream!

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I have one heck of a collection of lucha libre movies.

¡VIVA MULTICULTURALISM!

RAZORCAKE: *Quinceañara! Fifteen year anniversary! Quinceañara! Big party! Quinceañara! Quinceañara! Whoop de do! Quinceañara! Quinceañara! Quinceañara! WHOO!!!*

ME: (blank look)

ONE MONTH LATER: (blank look)

TWO MONTHS LATER: (blank look)

THREE MONTHS LATER: (blank look, slow blink)

SIX MONTHS LATER: (facepalm) OHHHH!!! LIKE THAT THING FOR ENRIQUE'S DAUGHTER ON *KING OF THE HILL!!!*

...so, yes. It took a while, but I finally figured out what a "quinceañara" is. It has something to do with fifteen-year-old Mexican girls. Sorry, my legal counsel advised me to lay off the fifteen-year-olds so I'm a bit out of the loop. I understand this lack of Teen Spirit may give the impression that I'm not properly grounded in the knowledge of other cultures—that I am perched on a remote mountain of *Sugar and Spike* comic books and Burl Ives records, disconnected from the rich tapestry of global culture. *Balderdash!* I assure you that I am BALLS DEEP in the rich tapestry of global culture! Now, no, I never took Spanish in school—all those trilled *r*'s and excitable bullfighters didn't seem like my scene (I took French instead, because I thought girls would find it sexy and irresistible. Hey, it always worked on Gomez Addams!)—and yes, it took me six months to figure out what a "quinceañara" is—but I'll tell you one goddamn thing about it: I have one *heck* of a collection of lucha libre movies. I believe I own close to a hundred of 'em, all in Spanish, most not subtitled. As such, bits and pieces of the Spanish language are beginning to take root in my consciousness. For example, I know that if someone knocks on my dressing room door after a match, I say *adelante*. I also know that if I am talking on a walkie-talkie, and I'm done talking, and now it's your turn to talk, I say *cambio*. I know if I go to see the police chief about mysterious jewel robberies, he tells me *muy peligroso* and *mucho cuidado*. If I go to see el Colonel about *las espias*, he also tells me *muy peligroso* and *mucho cuidado* (situations which are *muy peligroso* and thus require *mucho cuidado* seem to be very commonplace in Mexican cinema, as are staircases without railings, which are maybe what makes the situations so fraught with *peligroso*-ness in the first place) (another thing I learned from Mexican movies: One hundred percent of midgets are evil). If I am on the trail of jewel robbers or *espias*, I say *vamanos*, but if the jewel robbers or *espias* know that my posse and I am in hot pursuit, they say *vamanos pronto*. If I stick a gun in your back, I say *caminu*, then you say *escucha*, then I say *vamanos*—but if I stick a gun in your face, I say *arriba los manos* and you don't say anything if you know what's good for you. I know that all great advances in human achievement spring from the fertile brain of El Profesor: If El Profesor is a good guy, he will be killed, in dastardly fashion, within five minutes of completing his wondrous new invention, and the wondrous new invention will be co-opted for use by *el rey del crimen*. If El Profesor is a bad guy, however, he yells "*Sangre*! *Mucho sangre*!" at all hours of the day and night, and it's best to just stay out of his way. I know if I am fighting with a friend, I call him *tonto*, but then afterwards maybe I say *lo siento* to him for calling him such a thing; if I am fighting an enemy, however, it appears to be almost required by law that I must call him a *cobarde*, and I never say *lo siento* to a *cobarde*. I know a *bruja* rides a broomstick, and a *momia* is wrapped in gross bandages, and if a *momia* is out and about, it's probably because of *profandores del tumbas*, which will probably lead to a *maldicion* (meanwhile, a *llorona* is like a *bruja*, but more emo and not as sexy). I have witnessed *enmascarados* fighting bravely against *los marcianos, los cazadores de cabezas, los asesinos del otros mundos, las vampiras, los vampiros, el estrangulador, el espectro del estrangulador, el robot asesino, las mujeres panteras, las mujeres vampiras, cerebros del mal, cerebros infernales,* and *cerebros diabólicos*. I learned a *lot* about Mexico this way—mostly that there are a lot of fucking brains and vampires in that country—but nothing about the social rituals of teenage girls (I could, however, probably actually get by as a Spanish-speaking mad scientist's flunky. I figure I just need to be able to yell *maestro, los automatas*!!! every so often, and scoot out of the way any time he starts raving about the *sangre*). In short, it's not that I don't know anything about Mexican culture, it's just that my knowledge is very... specialized. Now, most luchador movies of the '60s and early '70s have at least one musical number in them, likely as much as a cheap way to fill time as anything. Thus, for brotherhood, do I share my specialized cultural knowledge, in a piece I call:

THE TEN BEST MUSICAL MOMENTS FROM LUCHA LIBRE FILMS I CAN THINK OF OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD

10. IMELDA MILLER y THE GAY CROONERS in *Neutrón contra Los Asesinos del Karate* (1964). Actually, I'm joking. This song sucks. I just think it's fun to say "Imelda Miller y The Gay Crooners," especially when Neutrón's ("el Enmascarado Negro!") main power seems to be the ability to show up unannounced in peoples' bedrooms wearing a gimp mask and no shirt.

9. LOS REBELDES DEL ROCK in *Neutrón contra los Autómatas* (1960). Los Rebeldes are a bunch of skinny Mexican teenagers with a black singer who sounds a little like a fourteen-year-old Harry Belafonte. They wear matching suits and do some nice synchronized shuffle steps together, but the coolest thing is probably their bass player's Danelectro® double cutaway sparkle bass. Modest as this band's charms are, it's claimed that their cover of "Poison Ivy" was the first rock tune broadcast on Mexican radio in Spanish. Also, they are in the opening credits of *Neutrón contra Los Asesinos del Karate*, but are nowhere to be found in the movie. After some inspection, I have come to the legit conclusion that they just reused the credits from the previous movie.

8. EL KLAN in *Blue Demon contra Las Diabólicas* (1966). El Klan are pretty great. They play instrumentals that sound like a cross between U.S. late '50s/early '60s *Teen Beat* fodder and Herb Alpert & The Tijuana Brass. Their main difference between *Norteamericano* units of the same bent is their trumpet (I think?) player, who's got this crazy trumpet that's the size and shape of a trombone. Never have I seen its like. I'd research the matter more fully but whenever I google "El Klan," I just get photos of Trump supporters.

7. ??? in *Superzan el Invencible* (1971). You tell me hipster irony is dead. I tell you that

ALEX BARRETT

I learned a lot about Mexico this way – mostly that there are a lot of fucking brains and vampires in that country.

you haven't *lived* until you've seen some portly fuck dressed head to toe in black—his look topped off by a black leather bondage hood—croon a heartrending ballad backed by a nine-piece Mariachi band!

6. LAS NOVELISTAS in *La Venganza del Huracán Ramirez* (1967). A Twiggy-like mod chick in a short, cool dress sings an impromptu song at a record store (which, interestingly, features a dedicated "extended play" section), and, on the strength of this, she is whisked away to a conveniently-located TV station, where she is immediately brought forward on camera to sing a number that seems largely but not wholly lifted from "Money" with Las Novelistas, skinny Mexican dudes with tight black jeans and matching nutty '60s print shirts. You may mock the maraca player who breaks into howls of delight every time the Twiggy girl enters his personal space, but you cannot deny "Las Novelistas" is pretty much the best Spanish language band name ever.

5. ELA LABORIEL in *Blue Demon: Destructor de Espías* (1967). Ela—who turns out to be the sister of Johnny, the singer of Los Rebeldes Del Rock—sings a perky little number called—ahem—"Mulata Go-Go," presumably about the inherent joys of being half black. While armchair sociologists take this moment to remove their jaws from the floor, I'll give it a 92! It's got a good beat and I can miscegenate to it!

4. SE TOCA in *La Sombre del Murciélago* (1966). Lucha films are largely black and white horror and crime flicks for the first half of the '60s, before mutating into sci-fi, then spy films, then back to horror and crime in 1970. As a *Phantom of the Opera*-styled horror flick (the title means "The Shadow of the Bat"), this movie has got the requisite lighting effects of the genre—sparse spotlights, deep shadows—which is what makes the scene where the '60s kids are dancing to "Bule, Bule"—the Spanish version of "Wooly Booly"—so weird: Instead of the girls in the white go-go boots jerking their hips and bobs in a bright, colorful riot of teenage action, as would be the case in an American film, the kids look like they're dancing the frug in a dimly-lit haunted house (NOTE: This is not the same "Bule, Bule" that leads off the *Los Nuggetz* box set. That one's by Los Shains, not to be confused with The Shanes, who were from Sweden).

3. QUINTETO MARAVILLA in *Santo contra Las Invasion de los Marcianos* (1966). Playing their great Rudy Pompili/Plas Johnson-styled sax instro, "Rock del Timbal" (comped on volume one of the *International Vicious Society* album series some years back), the Quinteto backs a quartet of gyrating Martian showgirls—the kind with the big, elaborate fruit basket hats—who eventually leave the stage, cluster around some blushing rich dude, and, to the horror of the crowd, suddenly disappear together. YOU'LL NEVER LOOK AT MARTIAN SHOWGIRLS THE SAME WAY!!!

2. EL KLAN in *Blue Demon contra los Cerebros Infernales* (1968). Possibly shot the same day as the previous El Klan entry (they haven't changed their yellow suits), this is the superior El Klan number, with the dude who plays the big, long trumpet managing to smoke a cigarette and blow the smoke out of his horn whilst actively throwing down. SEE? SMOKING *IS* COOL!

1. MIDORI NAGASHIRO in *Operación 67* (1967). This song is just some bunk "Japanese" thing with a wood xylophone that Midori Nagashiro (who is secretly a SPY!!!) does a strip tease to in a club. But we get to see boobs! ¡VIVA MULTICULTURALISM!

Love,
–Nørb

No cops, no fights, no horseshittery.

The Icing on the (Razor)cake

This spring marked Razorcake's fifteenth year in existence. So what better way to celebrate a fifteen-year milestone than have a quinceañera, of course.

For those of you not in the know, a quinceañera is the celebration of a girl's transformation into womanhood on her fifteenth birthday. So, with that being said, our own Todd Taylor donned a dress of the most marvelous shade of magenta on October 1 and opened his house to properly celebrate. A dress, you say? Oh, it happened—believe me—and my wife Yvonne and I were honored to be part of his court. This was a formal affair, people, and the definition of "formal" was at the attendee's discretion. Heh, it was across the fucking board, to say the least, each gussying up with some pretty rad results.

Razorcakers from all over the country trekked to Los Angeles for this fifteen-year celebration, including my holmes Ty Stranglehold, who crossed the border from his home in Victoria, Canada to make it down. The turnout was pretty darn impressive, to say the least, and it was fantastic to catch up with a grip of people I haven't seen in some time, like pals Toby Tober, Donna Ramone, Jim Ruland, Sean Carswell, and Skinny Dan Clarke. With so many out-of-towners making it for the weekend, it was also a cool opportunity to finally meet in person the names I have only seen in print over the past years, like Kevin Dunn, Kurt Morris, Michael T. Fournier, and Mike Faloon.

Original Razorcake cake illustrator, Dave Guthrie, was on hand inside the office, drilling select Razorcake tattoos into flesh that day. He ended up inking eighteen pieces (!) total before joining the festivities.

Soon after people started crowding into Todd's backyard, the quinceañera court was introduced. Todd then proceeded to have his first dance with his "Dad," Candice Tobin (who also gave a very heartfelt speech). Things got a bit raucous when Rocket From The Crypt got thrown on and the patio dance floor got pogo-tested by Todd and his chambelan, Ever Velasquez, along with the entire court.

The tunes were aplenty with DJs Susan Du Place, brotherman Juan Espinosa, and Claudia Hernandez spinning some choice vinyl whilst mixologist Seth Swaaley made sure those who were glug-glugging were doing so properly with strong pours. Copious amounts of tortilla chips and guacamole from local Mexican food gods My Taco were on hand, as well as vegan tres leches cupcakes, handmade by Clara Acosta. Robert El Diablo even made it out a bit later with his rolling cooler in tow to wet whistles that needed wetting. The extended media room in the back was even turned into a makeshift photo shoot area (#cakeceanera), with a bitchin' fifteen-year commemorative, hand-cut felt backdrop constructed by Jennifer Federico.

A bonus addition to the soirée was having two bands whose members are made up of almost all Razorcake peeps play. Desidia (who is comprised of Rene Navarro, Daryl Gussin, Marcos Siref, and Joshua Rosa) pummeled out a set of hardcore blasts that got the crowd's attention as soon as they kicked off their set, with frontman Rene circling back and forth against the rim of the crowd. La Tuya went on next, who are made up of Scott Rodarte (Ollin), and Razorcake folks Jimmy Alvarado (Butt Acne) and myself. Not only was this a special anniversary gig to be playing because of what we were celebrating that night, but it was extra special to me for a coupla reasons. Jimmy and Scott grew up together, playing in some bands together these past years. I've known Jimmy since we were both writing a long, long while back at *Flipside* (when Todd was co-editing!), yet we've never been in a band together. It was an almost full circle type of situation, and La Tuya has only been up and swinging since this past April. The icing on the (Razor)cake was having the trio La Victoria perform a few tunes right before us, then joining alongside us the second half of our set. Much thanks to Vaneza Calderón (guitarrón), Rosalie Rodriguez (violin), and Mary Alfaro (guitar)—La Victoria are bad *ass*.

Two custom-made Razorcake piñatas were hacked and walloped at, one being our razor cutting into the cake logo, and the other the face of a black kitten from a previous donation drive. Matthew Hart can now confidently add "piñatateer" to his resume. People had to work hard for a huge assortment of traditional Mexican candies to rain out of those piñatas (as well as an assortment of, er, ah, adult novelties, party aids, and such). Kayla Greet also got a nice punch in at the end of her turn. I'm just glad no one got seriously injured during people's turns swinging. (Good thing you switched out the bat for that taped-up PVC stick, Todd, heh). It could've escalated quickly had brother Art Fuentes attacked 'em like a bear clawing a salmon out of the river. Next time, Art. Next time.

To be honest, I can't remember the last time I've had this much fun at a backyard party. No cops, no fights, no horseshittery—just nothing but rad fun and people laughing. I can only hope we continue this tradition and even possibly turn this into a yearly gathering. It's much too fun to think otherwise, and I know for certain I ain't the only one who shares this sentiment.

Razorcake has always been the sum of its greater parts over the years. That sum has continued to grow into a substantial reserve

Just nothing but rad fun and people laughing.

TODD TAYLOR

of writers, artists, and photographers. This doesn't even take into account the amount of invaluable staffers and volunteers who have also done their part during this magazine's existence. Amongst all the people contributing their various kinds of talents and energy, a helluva lot of friendships have been made, due to Razorcake these last fifteen-plus years—some that carried over from before, mostly due to the small world of punk rock or growing up together.

I quickly began looking to my 'Cake brothers and sisters as extended familia since the beginning days back in 2001—even if some of us may or may not see eye to eye on all levels—because the bottom line is a family that respects each other always take care of their own. I also think respect for each other has helped cement the longevity and strength of Razorcake's continued success. For that, I'd like to personally thank all y'all who have had a hand in doing so.

I can only hope the small handful who couldn't make it will be able to do so for future events. I overheard someone saying, "This party is like a fuckin' class reunion you actually *want* to go to!" I couldn't have said it better my fuckin' self.

Todd, it's been a hell of an amazing fifteen years being part of this familia.
Keep on keepin' on.

Love you guys.

–Designated Dale

Mr. Ben Snakepit, I want you to know that Peeber was indeed toasted this night and that our thoughts are with you and Karen over your recent loss. He's surely tearing ass through the afterlife grass with our feline thick white duke, Bowie.

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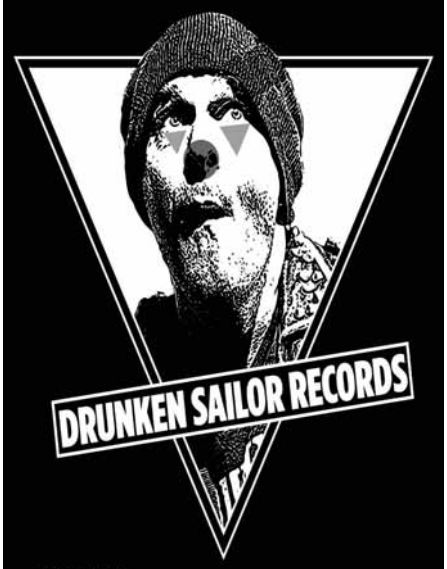

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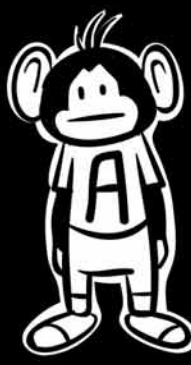
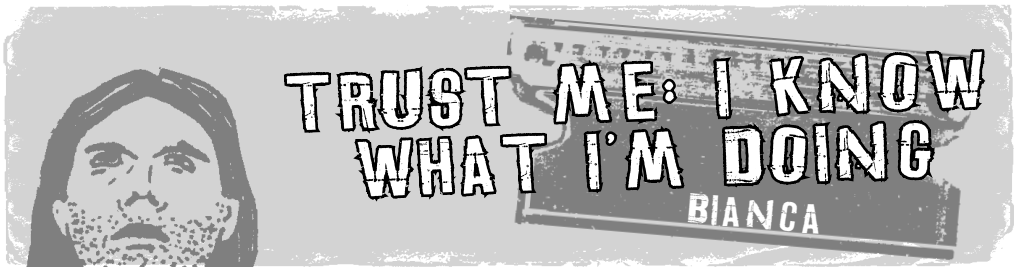
CHICO SIMIO #58 BY ART F.

SOMETIMES I FEEL LOST, FLOATING IN A WORLD THAT FEELS SCARY AND STRANGE...

AT TIMES I AM SO ALONE THAT I FEEL I WILL TOTALLY DISAPPEAR...



BUT THEN I REALIZE THAT I HAVE A LOT OF FRIENDS, WHO ARE ALSO MY FAMILY, THAT CARE FOR ME AND WHO I CAN TURN TO FOR SAFETY AND COMFORT. I FEEL LUCKY TO BE A PART OF THIS BIG, LOVING FAMILY. RAZORCAKE FAMILIA POR VIDA!!!



I was called in for jury duty.

Summoned

I was called in for jury duty on a Friday. I'd been calling in to the juror hotline since Monday to see if I had to report to court, and all week they'd said "no." Now, on the last day I could have possibly been eligible for jury duty, I was on the hook to come in. I was disappointed by this turn of events.

I reported to the courthouse as directed at 8:30 AM. Nothing official was happening, so I began to visually assess the other poor saps sitting in the chairs of the jury room.

There was the lanky, older dude with poufy, curly hair—supposedly Annie Leibovitz's first photo assistant—who told me he was currently restoring a racy documentary he shot in the 1970s about the wild world of freestyle skiing. There was an older man with a blobby, sea-green hand tattoo who later warned me police in the nearby suburb of Glendale would give me shit if I rode a loud motorcycle. (I did not.) There was the disgruntled lady who turned out to be a deep-tissue masseuse by trade—a job that she herself agreed was ideally suited for her, because she was so angry.

But, because it was just the first hour of the first day of our being stuck in a nearly windowless room together, I didn't know the rich back stories of these people yet. Instead, I was distracted by the one person in the room who seemed to be an open fucking book.

This guy looked like the kind of person who would have four bags of old newspaper clippings on the bus. A grumpy-faced man with long, greasy hair, he was wearing ancient New Balances, a pair of snap-away track pants, and an untucked long-sleeved shirt he might have worn while he was painting a room in his house ten years ago. He looked like someone let the air out of an old biker.

In keeping with my presumptions about him, this deflated man was very upset we were called in at this hour of the morning to watch a movie. The movie was actually a juror orientation video. It was informative, but too long. In the film, former jurors spent about thirty-five minutes assuring us that jury duty is an amazing, rewarding experience—an especially hard sell to a group of people who thought they were going to get off easy, but instead got called into a courthouse before 9 AM. "My wife warned me about this," the Deflated Man said aloud, nodding toward the TV screen.

Wait, this guy is married?

When the video ended, a judicial assistant came into the room to tell us it would be "a minute" before we got into the courtroom. In fact, many minutes passed. Maybe sixty of them. The Deflated Man was pissed. The assistant came in again to tell us it would be just a few more minutes. More time passed .

When the assistant came in a third time to dismiss us very early for lunch, the Deflated Man cut into him. "Dismiss us for the day! This is outrageous. You can't keep us here—we're not on a jury!" The judicial assistant responded passive-aggressively, as though he'd had enough, even though it was only 10:30 in the morning. He told the Deflated Man that we all must continue to return until we were selected for a jury or dismissed. They went back and forth arguing for a bit, the Deflated Man muttering defiant responses at the assistant like a barking dog that's been told to stop, but has to have the last word.

When we got back from lunch we were finally called into the courtroom for about thirty minutes—just long enough for the judge to tell us we were potential jurors who were all going to need to return on Monday.

We did as we were instructed—even the Deflated Man was there. So far there hadn't been a word out of him. He still looked like he was wearing pajamas, but he'd tucked his shirt in this time. We were in the jury room, waiting to be called into the courtroom. While we were waiting, we completed a juror survey full of questions about our personal lives—what our day jobs were, how many cops we knew, whether we'd been a victim of a crime or not.

After the survey was collected, we were shuffled around again and sent on a lunch break. As we filed out of the courthouse, I noticed the Deflated Man was met by the wife I couldn't believe he had. I was even more shocked by her appearance. She was roughly his age, but, in stark contrast to him, she was a sharp dresser, wearing bright jewel tones, bracelets and rings to match, and cute sandals. Her blondish-white bob was combed back elegantly like Lauren Bacall. She walked up to the front of the courthouse just as he passed through the front doors, and she smiled when she saw him. They clasped hands and together they walked down the sidewalk. He shuffled and was a little shaky, I noticed for the first time.

As they walked by me, the two of them chuckled and spoke softly to each other, like sweethearts from a 1940s musical who were seconds away from a passionate, closed-mouth kiss. Seeing this tender display transformed my fellow jury pool member in my eyes. No longer a run-of-the-mill crank, the Deflated Man became a complex figure who made my bottom lip quiver a little bit.

When we returned from our break, we went straight into the courtroom. It just so happened the Deflated Man was one of the first questioned about his answers to the juror survey we had taken earlier. He was retired, so the judge asked him about his previous work experience. "I was a psychologist for the school districts. I worked with junior high and high school students. I loved my job," he said. "Those were the best days of my life."

"Now that I'm retired, there's not a lot to do. There's no system in place in this country to help retired people who...who still have talent." The lawyers took notes.

The judge sensed the wrenching of hearts beginning to take place among many in the courtroom and tried to keep the mood light.

"Well, now that you're retired," he asked, "what is a typical day like for you?"

The Deflated Man thought for a second and then said, "Well, I walk." He thought some more. "I garden."

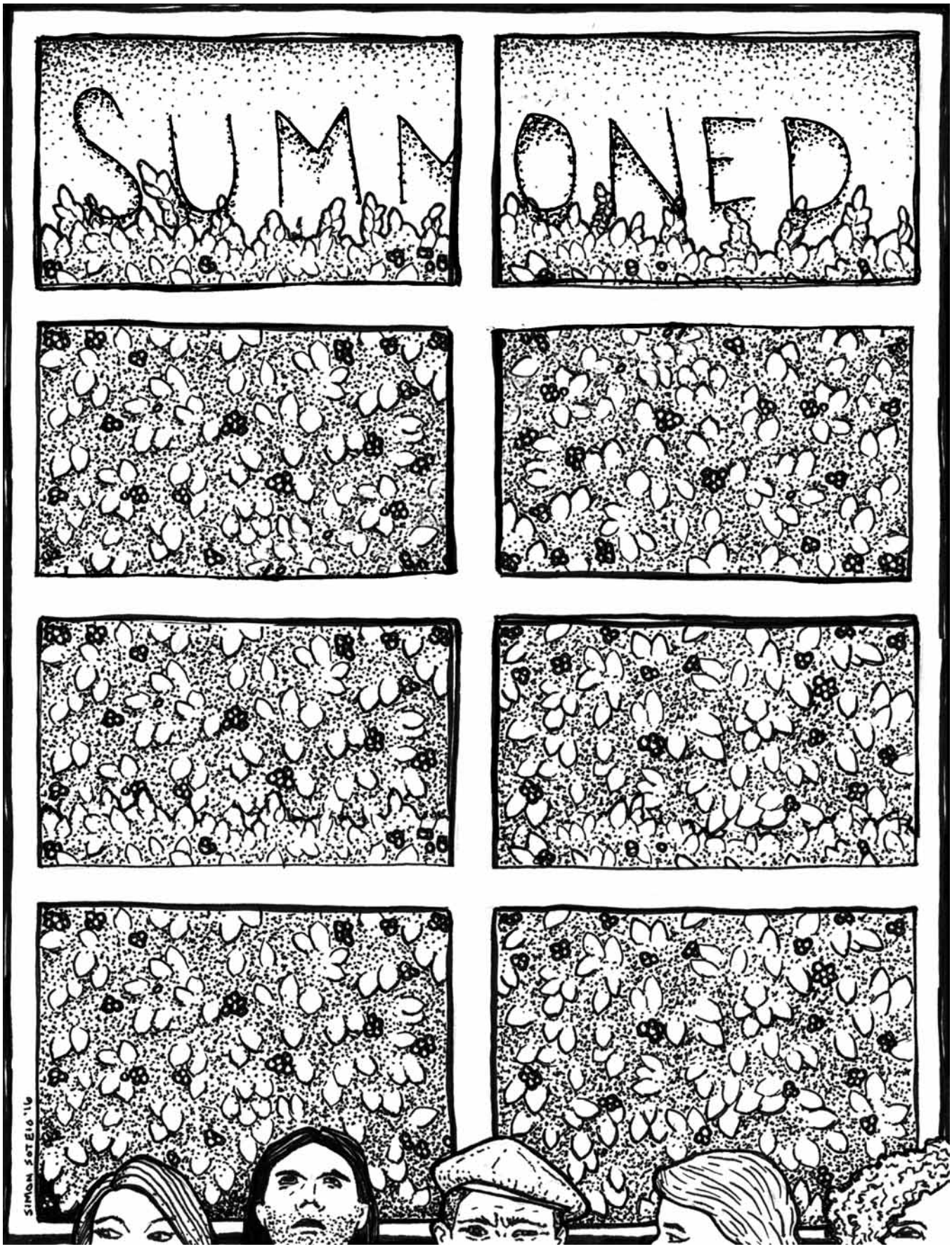
"What do you grow in your garden?" the judge asked.

"Well, right now, a hedge. I water it." Pause. "It grows."

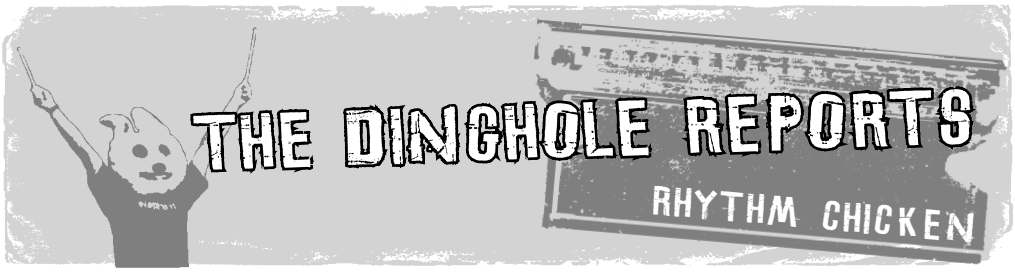
The courtroom filled with soft, polite laughter, but I thought maybe we were all struggling not to cry.

–Bianca

I was disappointed by this turn of events.



SIMON SOTELO



It just felt cool to sit behind the kit...

The Prophecy of Poultry

It was a grey and dreary October afternoon. I was riding my skateboard home from school and ran into my old buddy, Worm. We went to skate the half pipe in his neighbor's backyard until it started to rain. The rain drove us into Worm's house where he took me into the basement to see his drum set. I had been playing the stand up snare drum in the seventh grade concert band, but had never actually sat at a drum set before. It was a very primitive and beat-up kit, yet it seemed like an amazing component of rock'n'roll machinery to my young, wide-eyed mind. I tried playing some kind of lame drumbeat for about thirty seconds before I remembered to add in the bass drum. I had no idea what I was doing, but I was hooked.

A few months later, after incessant begging on my part, my parents got me my first used drum set. It was my Christmas and birthday present combined, and that was fine with me. All that mattered was I had a drum set I could play any time. Every night after dinner I would go down into the basement and bash away on those drums for a good couple hours. I would listen to my cassette tapes of the local punk rock radio show and try to imitate the drumbeats. I failed miserably. I wasn't super horrible, but I wasn't very good either. It just felt cool to sit behind the kit and bash away like Animal from the Muppet Show, my main drumming influence at that time.

About a year later I found myself in German class with an enticing extra credit assignment. The textbook had some German lyrics written out for an obscure pop song. I think it was called "Du Bist So Schohn," or something like that. Jess and JD were two classmates who were beginner guitarists and wanted to make a project band to record our own version of this song. The simple idea of "making a band" seemed just about cooler than the Fonz at that point in my life. None of us had ever played in a band before, but that didn't slow us down. Our first (and only) band practice was set for that next Saturday at JD's house, which was, incidentally, about four houses down the road from Rev. Nørb's house at the time. Yeah, Green Bay is a small town.

My dad drove me and my drums over to JD's house. Once there, he realized JD was the grandson of my grandfather's friend, and *they* had played in a band together back in the early 1900s! Soon enough, Jess showed up with his guitar and amp and the three of us were in the basement ready to try that rock'n'roll thing. We made completely unorganized noise for the first hour with each person trying to play his own thing. It sounded awful, yet in a weird way *it felt completely amazing!* It felt like *ROCK'N'ROLL!* Eventually, after another three hours of barely disciplined band practice, we had the music figured out for one three-chord song.

It was time to get the boombox and place it strategically in the middle of the room. JD was voted to be the singer so he was hunched over singing directly at the high-tech recording device. I tried drumming louder and louder out of fear of not being heard over their screaming guitar amps. I think it took us about fifty recording attempts to get the whole song done well enough to call the project done. As soon as we were all happy with the recording, the band practice turned into a childish game of punching each other in the balls. We were fourteen years old.

On Monday, we brought the extra credit rock'n'roll cassette to German class and begged Herr Larson to play it for the whole class. He made us wait until the last few minutes of the class period, but then allowed the rock'n'roll evidence to be blasted out of the classroom cassette deck. JD introduced the band as "JD und die Jammers." Some students drummed along on their desktops. Some snickered and played mock air guitars. A few booed and said how much it sucked. Herr Larson sat behind his desk and tried to hide his smirks of amusement. It really was quite awful, but it was rock'n'roll, and we felt like rock stars for about five minutes.

The following week I tried to rally Jess and JD up for another band practice, but soon found out they were already practicing with another drummer and hired now Razorcake record reviewer Lord Kveldulfr as their singer. The band name was soon changed to JD And The Jammers. Our German classroom hit song "Du Bist So Schohn" was rewritten with English lyrics and became "I Want a Moosehead." They soon became the *cool* rock band of the school and I was again back in my own basement bashing away alone.

A few months later, I was drumming for a much more abrasive punk band called Loud Fast Aggression. Real original name, I know. After two ear-piercing band practices, we played our one and only show in a church basement for the singer Todd's religious education class. We were not very well received, but it still felt rockin'. Loud Fast Aggression tried out for the school talent show, but were soundly beat out by JD And The Jammers as they earned the right to perform as the only band.

The next year, I started playing in a few better bands—bands which actually wrote more than three songs, bands that actually played at punk shows, bands where band practice didn't deteriorate into a game of *punching each other in the balls* (well, not as often, anyway).

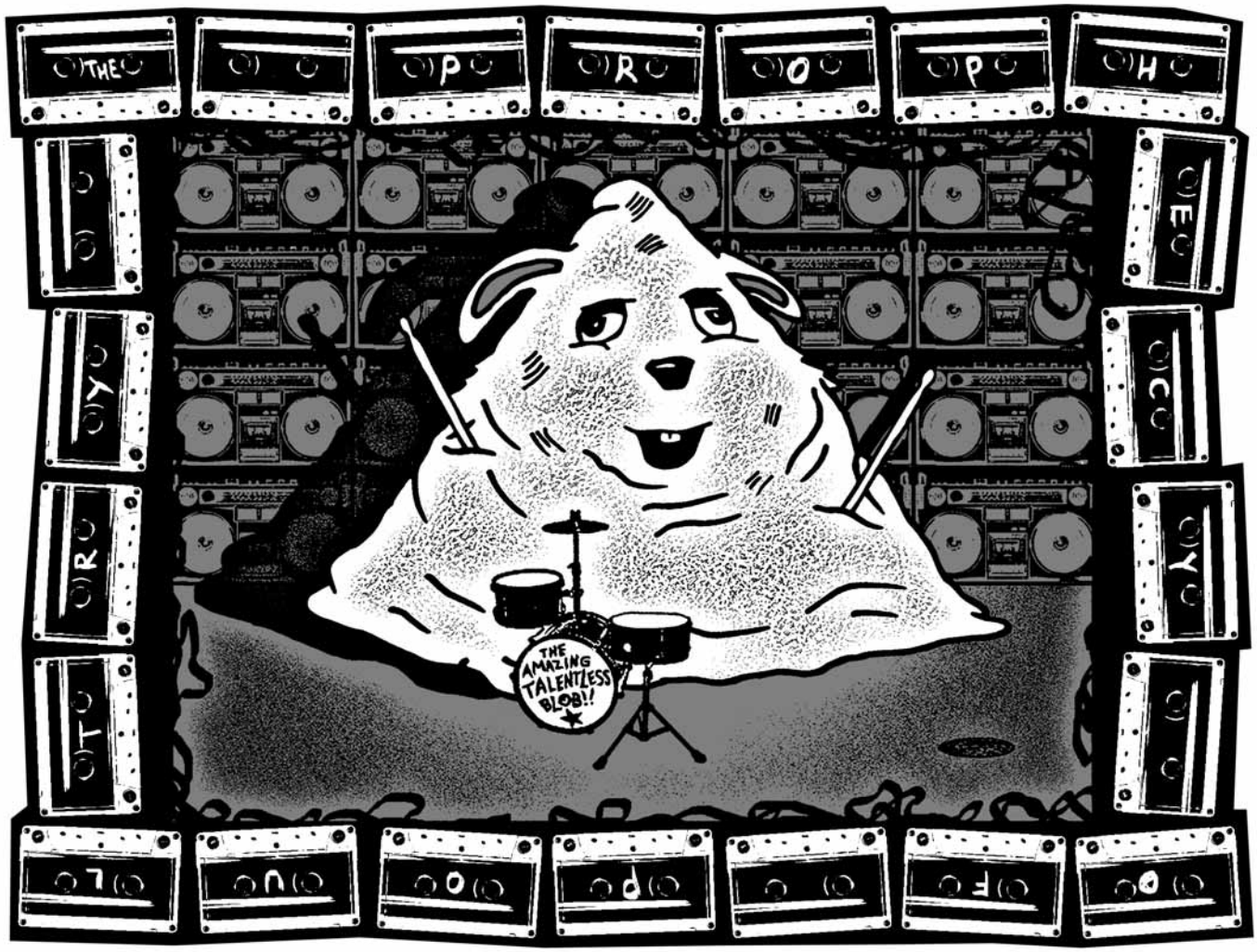
Lately, though, I've been doing a lot of thinking back to those first two bands. We weren't very good at all, but those first band memories are really hard to shake. For every progressive step I've taken in later bands, the Rhythm Chicken has made an equal and opposite *digressive* step, since I've given up bands altogether. Now I feel like I've digressed back to the stage of those first bands, and here I am with a hurting back full of metal rods and screws.

Is this the end?

So here I am, typing away in my bed above my Northwoods soup shop, thinking about what became of my old band mates. JD went to recording school and now plays in a cover band in Nashville. Jess became the only employee at Green Bay's Concert Cafe for some of the best years of Green Bay's rock'n'roll before he joined the Marines and did multiple tours in the Middle East. Lord Kveldulfr is now a professor in South Carolina and still writes music reviews in these very pages. Paul Ackerman, the drummer who replaced me, went on to become one of my top five all-time favorite drummers and now lives in Kansas City.

As for the other two guys in Loud Fast Aggression, GJ the guitarist later went on to become a rodeo star. At one time he worked as an apprentice under my dad, but then went on a honeymoon to Mexico and dove into the shallow end of a pool, broke his neck, and soon died. Todd, the singer whose church we actually performed in, now manages a campground near my soup shop and I never see him. And then there's Worm. He went on to be a truck driver for many years, but is now back in Green Bay full-time and last I heard he joined Dave Smalley on stage for a few songs during his last tour. As for me, I'm still selling soup to tourists and locals here along the shore of Lake Michigan with a back full of metal.

If there's any type of lesson to be learned from all this, I guess it would be that punkers



ERIC BASKAUSKAS

...and bash away like Animal from the *Muppet Show*, my main drumming influence at that time.

generally go on to live pretty interesting lives... except for me. I seem to have come full circle and digressed back to the talentless blob I was in seventh grade.

Pre-Rhythm Chicken Dinghole Report #1: My Inner Keith Moon Hatched Early! (Pre-Rhythm Chicken Sighting #-17)

Loud Fast Aggression had three songs. At our one *show* in the church basement, we played these three songs to a frightened group of church-going teenagers and some irate adult instructors who tried to mildly encourage the creative endeavors of three spiky-haired punks.

Then we played the tryouts for the junior high school talent show. *This was fun.* We opened with a pathetic version of "Wipeout"—where the drum solo part was laughable at best—to the apathetic yawns of the judges. Then "We Ain't Got No Rights" by Neon Christ (though if Neon Christ ever heard our version, I don't think they'd recognize it) woke them up enough to know they would not let us play. Then our third song, the shining opus we called "The Thrash Song," erupted from our spasming bodies! In this "song," we really just thought it was cool to completely go nuts and play totally fast, thrashy noise with no discernible structure for a good sixty seconds. Sadly, this was our best song. We jumped and squirmed around like fish out of water! We pounded out a good sixty seconds of pure offensive *noise*! We were... we were.. *we were thrashing*! At the perfectly orchestrated climax of this song, I channeled my inner-Keith Moon, my inner-loon, and I pounded my drum set so ferociously that the bass drum, snare drum, and both cymbals and stands all fell over with a horrendous *crashhhhh*!

JD And The Jammers were nearby, laughing their asses off. The talent show tryout judges made their decision in record time. GJ and Todd both looked at me with that look on their faces that just said, "Yeah, we lost, but *holy shit; this simply fuckin' ruled!*" *Punk rock!* It may have been fourteen years before the Rhythm Chicken officially hatched, but the prophecy of poultry was being written.

–Rhythm Chicken

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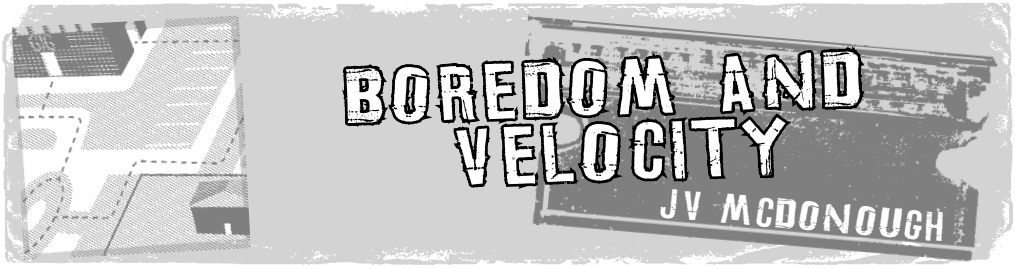

Vermin, psychotic housemates, horny pit bulls...

We'll Leave the Light on for You

(So You Can Better Avoid the Bloodstains)

Everyone is familiar with the two diametrically opposed clichés of touring. There's the general public's image of a gleaming bus jetting between concert halls, trashed penthouse hotel rooms, and gorgeous hangers-on waiting backstage with designer drugs and sexual favors. Then there's the war stories of the diehard DIYers: demonically possessed tour vans that break down in only the most desolate and dangerous places, reeking squats where even bedbugs won't set foot, and creepy stalkers who show up where they shouldn't.

The second scenario is likely the reality for most of us, but if we're honest, it's not really that bad most of the time. Usually we can expect a safe place to stay, maybe even a fresh towel and a cup of coffee in the morning along with some genuine kindness from our hosts who can put a dent into the malaise that sets in on long stretches between venues. That is the reality, as boring as it seems.

Of course we sometimes revel in our nightmare stories of bizarre accommodations: like the one about the house an earlier version of M.O.T.O. stayed where the *road kill nailed to the wall* was disturbing enough that the guys chose to sleep outside on a trampoline, or the tale someone told me about staying at a friend-of-a-friend's house in a room filled with real Nazi memorabilia and whose regular sig-heiling occupant came back home unexpectedly to find a couple of punk rock kids crashed in his bed. Vermin, psychotic housemates, horny pit bulls…you never know what awaits you when you rely on the hospitality of strangers far from home. Come on, admit it: sometimes no matter how punk rock you are, you shell out for a motel room.

* * *

Of course, when you're traveling with a whole ensemble, the motel idea loses some steam. Let's say there are five of you. Two beds, two to a bed and someone on the floor? When you put it that way, it becomes obvious that even that dude from the other band's one-bedroom apartment has more space than a motel room. So two rooms? Do they charge per person, and do we have to do that old "sneaking people in" thing? Or do we go whole hog and get as many rooms as we want? Is it really worth it all for an actual bed, HBO, and some of those little shampoos? Probably not. You're gonna get kicked out at 11AM anyway, so how much can you really enjoy it?

On the other hand, when you're lucky enough to travel as a two-piece who picks up mercenary support musicians from town to town, the pay-to-stay option becomes much more practical. Paul and I have indulged in the heady pleasures of the louche lodge lifestyle more and more as we age and have become connoisseurs of the no-tell motel model.

You can break down motel quality by the staircase/elevator situation. No staircase is pretty much entry-level. These are the places that may have once been touristy summer spots but now they charge by the hour to truckers and dealers. Outdoor staircase is sketchy, more so if there isn't an elevator, but at least you know they're selling rooms if there's more than one floor of them. Interior elevator with the staircase discreetly hidden behind a door? Caviar dreams and champagne wishes, baby. You've arrived!

Over the years, we have perfected the last-minute, late night load-in of instruments and merch (touring the Deep South in summer means you can't leave those five boxes of LPs in the vehicle), the negotiation for the latest checkout time possible, the angling for a "handicapped" room, since they are always on the first floor and are larger. I've even developed a taste for the let's-call-it-coffee that comes out of the crappy little one-serving machines that most places have these days. It's stuff I could never stomach anywhere else, just like the hot dog that will only taste good if there's a baseball game being played in front of you while you eat it. But that first tiny cup of lame-ass joe, over-sweetened with every single powdered creamer and sugar in the room, is a sensory signifier that WE ARE ON THE ROAD, Y'ALL. Look at me drinking this garbage and pronouncing it excellent! Must mean we're touring. So it's good.

When you're cruising at the barrel-bottom level of motor lodging, you can expect a wide variation of quality from place to place. It often has nothing to do with the price tag, either. We've held our noses and dropped a desperate forty-five bucks, expecting to be slumming it in a nasty room, only to find a pristine, giant space with a kitchenette where a person could conceivably live quite comfortably. And we've splurged after a particularly good merch night on what we thought would be a palatial suite only to find a smoke-smelling, badly lit troll cave with no Wi-Fi and what looked like grape juice stains on the vomit-colored industrial carpet. At least I hope they were grape juice stains. You never can tell.

* * *

It was in March, 2015 we found ourselves playing in one of our favorite parts of the country, Lancaster, Pa. Some of our most memorable gigs have been in the York and Lancaster areas and there is no shortage of familiar faces who are happy to put us up at their homes. However, for some reason on this trip, we decided we would motel it along with our guitarist Dan McNellie and his wife Yago, who made the trip down from Pittsburgh. One would think finding a hotel in the tourist-iest section of Amish country wouldn't be that tall an order. But there was some kind of local sporting event (Regional buggy races? Competitive butter-churning? I have no idea.) that had every place we tried turning us away. Driving around at 2:30AM from motel to motel after playing a show is not the most effective way to wind down. The car-to-car cell phone conversations as we tried to coordinate our next move were becoming more frustrating. Finally, we found a sprawling, multi-building motel along the main drag that had a "Vacancy" sign still up. Exhausted and relieved, we checked in, said good night, and went to our respective rooms. Then the texts from Dan started.

"This is the weirdest room. Look what was on the sink."

Accompanying the text was a photo of a huge Stihl chainsaw, its camouflage cover resting underneath it, perched on the edge of the bathroom sink.

What. The. Actual. Fuck.

When you check into a low-rent motel, you can sometimes expect to find evidence of prior residents that the cleaning crew may miss: a forgotten lighter, a broken shoelace, maybe a candy wrapper or a false eyelash. But a giant power tool often used as an instrument of torture and mayhem in the modern horror movie genre? That is, as they say, *rather a lot*.

NATION OF AMANDA

Come on, admit it:

sometimes no matter how punk rock you are, you shell out for a motel room.

Two minutes before that text arrived, I was luxuriating in the concept of finally getting to lie down after a long day of driving and a full-tilt show. Now my mind was ricocheting between a sense of morbid dread and absolute hilarity. Because who the hell stays in a motel room, takes out their chainsaw in the bathroom, and then forgets it? Is this the plot for a Wes Craven film featuring a lovable but terrifying ex-Mennonite serial killer who preys on tourists and punk rockers: *The Absent Minded Maniac* starring Ed Begley, Jr.? Minutes later, as I was explaining the situation to Paul ("They found a *what* in their bathroom?"), my phone pinged again.

"Did you guys have a weird cardboard box full of canned goods in your room?"

Another picture, this one of said cardboard box, arranged vertically to accommodate a collection of Chef Boyardee, Louisiana Hot Sauce, and Grey Poupon.

Okay. I figured out the plot.

Apparently, we were staying in some Amish-gothic murder motel and the lady who checked us in was the mother of a chainsaw-wielding psychotic farmboy with a taste for Spaghetti-Os. To keep him from going out into town and causing trouble with the locals, every once in awhile she rents his room out to unsuspecting travelers who are obviously desperate for a place to stay. Sometime in the middle of the night, he returns to his room, fires up the chainsaw, and sates his bloodlust. Then he enjoys a can of Beefaroni and goes back to being the slow-witted but genial groundskeeper. That must be how this works.

In spite of this, somehow everyone went to sleep and didn't wake up dismembered.

* * *

A couple years before the Chainsaw Incident we were lucky enough to tour China. Our hosts arranged for our first few days to be spent at Broadway Mansions, a five star hotel right in the middle of The Bund. I had never experienced anything like it. Everything was as deluxe as you could imagine, from the uniformed bellboys, to the gourmet minibar, to the ridiculously comfortable giant bed where we slept off our jet lag. We were on the fifteenth floor, and our view looked out over the Huangpu River, surrounded by the glittering lights of the Shanghai skyline and the Iron Bridge. When we emerged from our first nap to join our hosts for dinner, I couldn't contain my excitement.

"I cannot believe that you got us this room," I said breathlessly to Lao Bi, our guitarist and primary fixer, "It's amazing. I don't even know if I can get used to it!"

"Don't worry" he replied, "In a couple days it'll all be downhill from here."

I guess that was true. But it seems only right we'd be most at home in the hostels, the "number" hotels, and the sleazy one-off motor lodges that are our version of living large. Maybe someday we'll be in the position to stay in those high-end dreamcastles with pools you can drive your convertible into and chandeliers you can swing from. In the meantime, just make sure we've got one of those crappy coffeemakers and a 1PM checkout. That's rock star enough for me.

–J.V. McDonough

Ol' Dirty Bastard signed my NYC welfare ID.

Nardwuar The Human Serviette vs. Leftöver Crack

Nardwuar: Who are you?
Stza: I'm Scott Sturgeon, aka Stza Crack.
Nardwuar: And right beside you, who do you have?
Stza: This is Mr. Brad Logan.
Brad: My name's Brad Logan of California. And Leftöver Crack.
Nardwuar: Do you still have, Stza, a strawberry chocolate horse in your freezer?
Stza: [laughs] Yes, it's still there.
Brad: That one from the tour?
Stza: Yes. I feel like…
Brad: It wouldn't die. We couldn't get that thing to die.
Stza: Brad named it because we put a picture on MySpace or something and you wrote, "Strawberry horse and rider," and then I was like, "Strawberry horse." I had been on this eight-hour van ride and I had this plastic horse with a bobble head and I stuffed strawberries down it all day. I did a lot of stuff like this in those days when I was like… let's say I was doing a lot of indiscriminant pill taking and perhaps, you know, what's that stuff that's here in Vancouver that everybody loves? Heroin.
Nardwuar: And I have a gift for you Stza—a Coup 12".
[Nardwuar presents a Coup LP]
Stza: Oh wow, cool.
Nardwuar: From '94.
Stza: This is a great song, too.
Nardwuar: What can you say about the Coup and Leftöver Crack?
Stza: Well, I have another band called Star Fucking Hipsters, and Boots Riley came in and did a song with us. There were a few moments in my life where I'm like, "Holy shit, how did I get to here, where I'm getting to do this really awesome thing with somebody I really respect?" I'd say there are two things that stand out: one is working with Boots and the other is when we did this Operation Ivy song with Jesse Michaels. That was big.
Brad: That was an "Oh shit" moment, too.
Stza: It was like—there was nothing that can really top that. Those two things are kind of untoppable in my book.
Nardwuar: Did you meet Biggie? I know you met Bushwick Bill—you were there at that time, in New York.
Stza: Well, I met Bushwick Bill in Austin like, three years ago. I didn't meet any of these people… the only person I did meet in the '90s that I'm really glad I met, [was] Ol' Dirty Bastard in SF in '96 or '97. The cool thing—well, I mean it's tragic, it's unfortunate that Ol' Dirty Bastard is dead. He's my favorite Wu Tang rapper, and one of my favorite rappers of all time—unmatched as his style is, there's nobody that has done anything like that in hip hop ever and it's debatable if anybody's done anything like that before him, including like Rudy Ray Moore and Blowfly, you know? They have their schtick, but they didn't do what Ol' Dirty Bastard did.

So I was homeless, living south of Market. We were living under the sidewalk on Mission and Third Street. I got to town and somebody dropped a bunch of money—let's just say they dropped a bunch of money. They were going to drop that money again, so I didn't give it back to them, and I bought a ticket for my friend Patrick to see Venom at this club in SF. We spent all the rest of the money on crack and pills and alcohol, and then Venom cancelled. Or maybe it was Mercyful Fate. Anyways, we'll just say Venom. We went to get the money back for the ticket, and they were like, "Well, you can have the money back or you can have a ticket to any of these other shows." They didn't want to give the money back.

I was like, "Oh, I'll go and see Ol' Dirty Bastard." So I went to the show and it was pretty good. He had a lot of other people rapping and rapping for him sometimes, but at the end of the show he was on stage and some people were getting stuff signed. But I was fifty people back and I was like, "My New York City welfare ID, where is it? It's his record cover." By the time I got it in my hand, he had disappeared and I was like, "All right."

So everybody else is going, getting in cabs and taking buses and getting in their cars and driving back to wherever they lived, whereas I was leaving the theater and going back towards the Tenderloin through the alleys and that's where I lived. I went just a few blocks up through the alleys—I was under the sidewalk at my place that I was squatting, and there he was, behind a chain link fence: I saw Ol' Dirty Bastard. I was like, "You know, he's got to see this welfare ID, even if whoever it is is going to say 'Hi' to the guy on welfare in New York." So I pull it out, and he's talking to somebody. He gets a grin, just like the one on your face right now—it's like that. And he comes up to the fence and I was like… I could hardly talk, it's the only time in my life I was tongue-tied, believe it or not. I was like, "But, but, uh, uh," and I said something about squatters liking Ol' Dirty Bastard because we were all dirty. And I was filthy. I was sleeping outdoors, no showers—Brad knew me at this time. And he went and found a pen—he ran around and got a pen—and he signed his name on it. I still have it to this day; it's pretty special. He went out of his way to sign my New York City welfare ID.
Nardwuar: Quote. "I think crusties are fine, but Stza is high on the stink meter. He's been kicked off planes."
Stza: What? Who said that?
Nardwuar: From?
Stza: From what?
Nardwuar: *Verbicide* fanzine.
Stza: Okay.
Nardwuar: Fat?
Stza: Wait, have I been kicked off a plane?
Nardwuar: Fat Mike?
Stza: Oh, Fat Mike, yeah, yeah, yeah.
Nardwuar: Your label head said that.
Stza: He did? Yeah, he definitely wasn't like super happy with how I smelled for a long time. Yeah, that's true. He's weird, too, because he'll share a dildo with you, and he'll be like, "Yeah, put on this latex thing that everyone was naked in all day," but then he's like, "Oh, you smell bad." I'm like, "Fuck you, man. You're stuck up. Who cares?"
Brad: True story.
Stza: You're hurting my feelings.
Nardwuar: What about the FBI hacking into your webcam?
Stza: I have a little piece of tape over it [laughing] so they don't see me masturbating. Obviously.
Nardwuar: Ba-boom! Stza of Leftöver Crack, what is crack like in Los Angeles?
Stza: When I was buying a lot of it, it was after I was living in Brad's garage and it depends on how much you had, but thirty bucks would buy you way too much crack to smoke in one evening, let me tell you, so it was apt that we were recording our first

MITCH CLEM

That wasn't actually the fettuccine crack, but there are all flavors of crack.

Leftöver Crack record. It was really good, you know, but tastes change. I'm not really into crack.

Nardwuar: I thought it was like fettuccine?

Stza: Oh right. Well, that is one. I'm thinking about this other spot, but when I would go down to MacArthur Park and buy crack. Yeah, they had it. They'd spit it out of their mouths. They obviously cured it in a little tray—there were skinny tubes of it. You ever had that, the fettuccine-looking crack?

Brad: I haven't had the fettuccine crack.

Stza: It does, yeah. But I got a lot more crack when I went up the hill by the highway in the bushes in the dark at night and I gave them money. They just handed me a bunch of rocks. That wasn't actually the fettuccine crack, but there are all flavors of crack, I guess, you know?

Nardwuar: Leftöver Crack, where did you discover me?

Stza: I got a DVD at Alternative Tentacles and then we were watching Star Fucking Hipsters on tour. We would be somewhere and, "Hey, they have a DVD player, so what have we got? Let's see—we have *Terminal City Ricochet*—in the garbage. We have the Pansy Division documentary. That's cool, I'll keep that. And then we had, I think we had NOFX *Backstage Passport* and we had Nardwuar the Human Serviette, The Best Of. So that was cool to watch. We enjoyed it. I feel like a lot of people that you interviewed have never seen you [laughs].

Nardwuar: Thank you, Jello Biafra.

Stza: Yeah, Jello Biafra spreading the word. Honestly, watching those, your interviews, I was like, "It's kind of sad that I'll never be able to get back in that country and so I'll probably never be able to meet Nardwuar and get interviewed," but now it's all happening.

Brad: Yeah.

Stza: Our whole lives have changed

Brad: Yeah.

Stza: And this is going to be one of the defining moments.

Brad: It's unfolding in front of us right now.

Stza: It has been years.

Nardwuar: How sad [laughing].

Stza: [laughing] Working with the Coup, Jesse Michaels, Nardwuar, and what else is there?

Brad: Where else is there to go from here?

Stza: Yeah.

Brad: The pinnacle.

Nardwuar: Well, thank you very much Leftöver Crack. Keep on rocking in the free world and doot doola doot doo…

Stza: Doot doo.

Hear and See this full interview at
nardwuar.com

Stike Anywhere at Alley Katz, RVA 11/08/02

Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column - Strike Anywhere

Chris Boarts Larson, www.slugandlettuce.net | fb.me/slugandlettuce

Strike Anywhere exploded onto the Richmond hardcore scene in the late '90s. Carrying the torch of Inquisition and following a similar path as Avail, they've been one of Richmond's favorite and most awesome bands of the past decade. From the first Richmond house show, through many local clubs, and fests afar, I've trekked post-hurricane to generator shows and stood stage- side at eight months pregnant with my fist in the air, singing along to them. From day one, Strike Anywhere has been a constant source of inspiration, fuel, and fire. This is a favorite photo that represents the band's energetic explosion. The members have scattered, and it's been a few years since I've seen them. Yet in an odd sort of serendipity, Strike Anywhere is set to play a small local show and a hurricane is heading towards Richmond once again. Life is a spiral and Strike Anywhere's anthemic songs have been one of the soundtracks for my journey.

–Chris Boarts Larson

"Cassandratic Equation"
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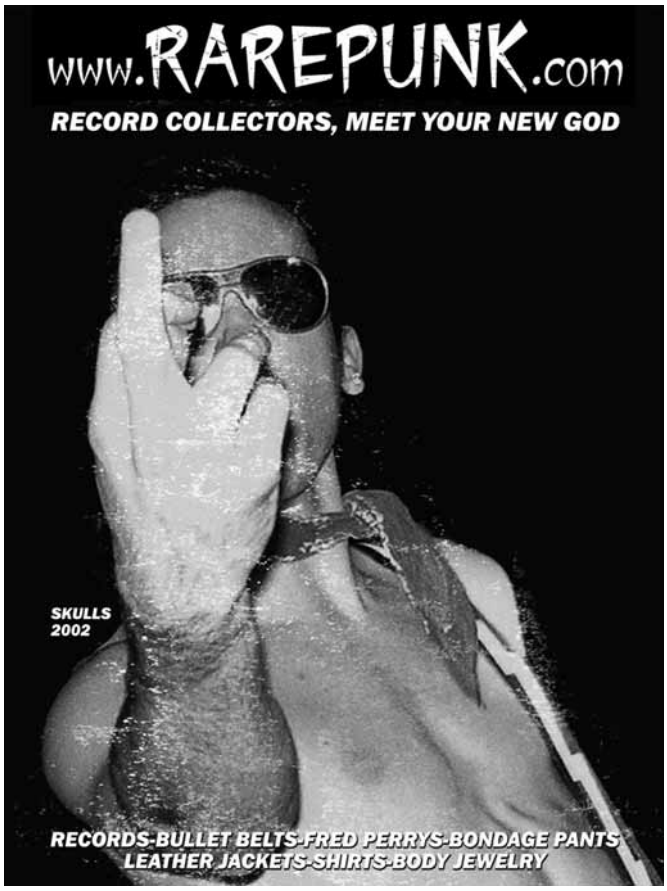
as the rich act like they've never felt any pain.



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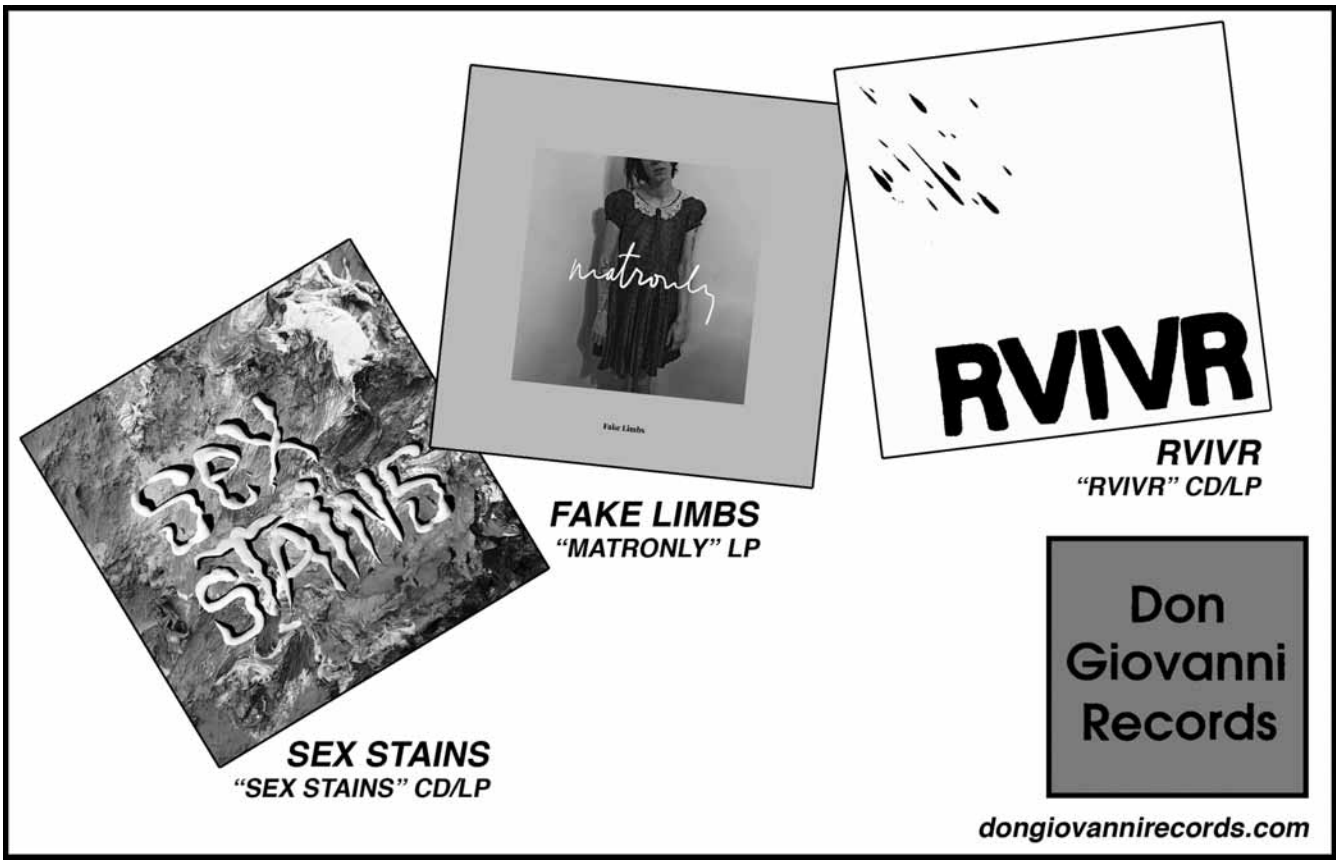

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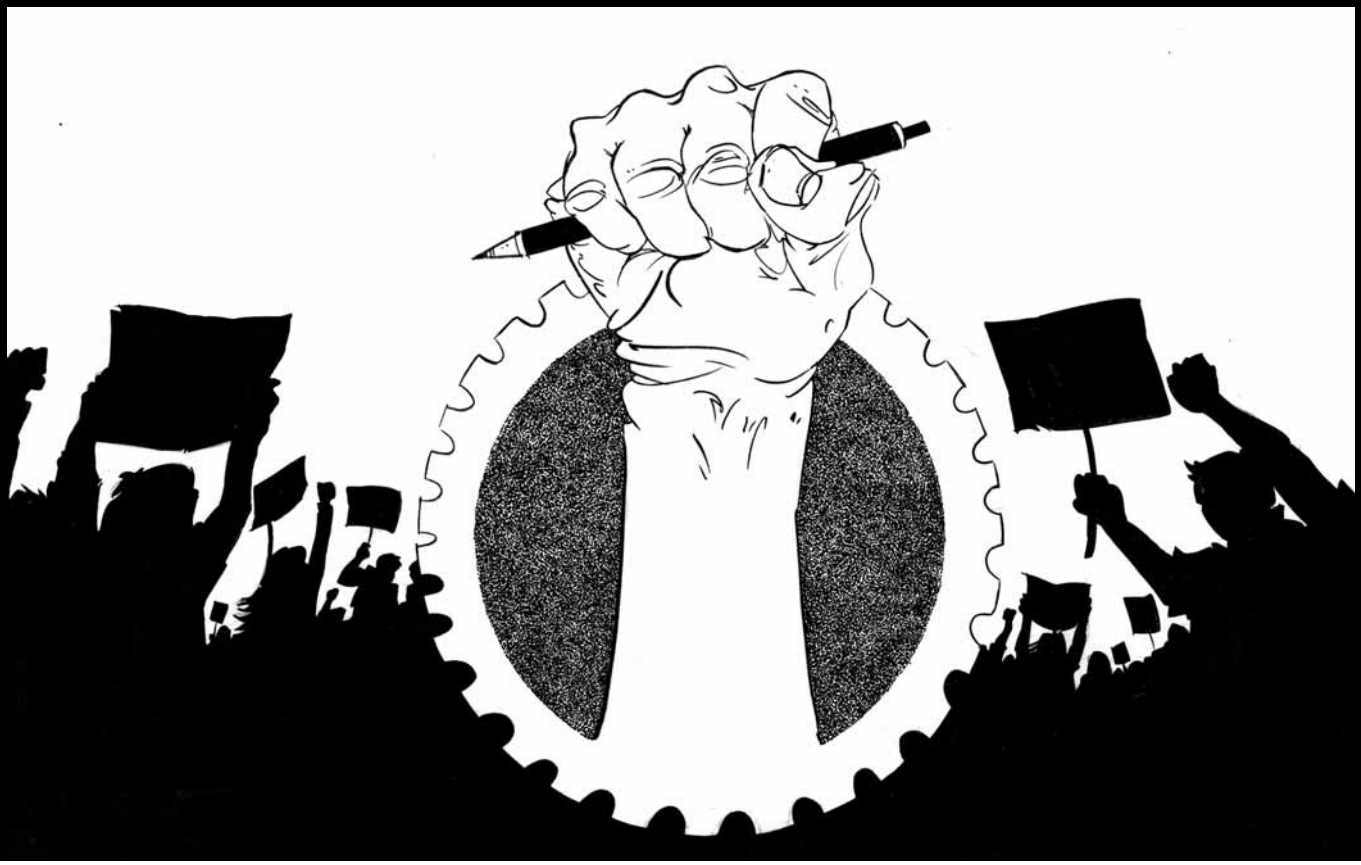

STEVE LARDER

The First Annual Chris Pepus Prize

On June 9, 2015, Chris Pepus took his life. To honor his memory and his work, Razorcake is announcing the first annual Chris Pepus Prize.

The winner will be awarded $350.

This is an open call for submissions, including those from current Razorcake volunteers.

Please visit **http://archive.razorcake.org/announcements/chris-pepus-in-memoriam-a-collection-of-chris-s-contributions** to get a fuller understanding of the breadth and depth of Pepus's work. All submissions will be compared to Pepus's standard of quality.

We are looking for pieces that capture and also push forward Pepus's spirit of fairness. They also must engage with and confront social class issues. (Or, in Pepus's words, they must be "against class bigotry.") Submissions should be well written, non-fiction, and punk applicable. Pieces can be narratives but must be research-based and factual. We are not looking for research papers.

We are not looking for rants or purely anecdotal articles.

Submissions should be between 3,000-5,000 words. Only the following attached formats will be accepted: (.doc, .docx, .rtf)

All submissions have to be submitted electronically, via **razorcake.org/contact-us**

All submissions must be open to rigorous editorial feedback and revision prior to publication.

Deadline for all submissions is Dec. 5, 2016. The pieces will be read and evaluated by a team of Razorcake contributors, with the winning submission(s) announced Jan. 21, 2017.

The winning piece will also be published in a future print edition of Razorcake (and later on www.razorcake.org).

ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO CHRISTIAN PUNK

By Kurt Morris

Illustrations By Steve Thueson

I can almost guarantee your first thought when you saw the title to this piece was, "Christian punk? What in the world is an article about Christian punk doing in *Razorcake?*" Well, it's likely you've come across a punk or two (especially if you live in an area with a predominantly Christian population) who describes themselves as a Christian punk. And if you're not a Christian punk I'm sure you've wondered how such terms could be put together. Isn't punk against Christianity? Thankfully for you, dear readers, during my high school and college years I was a Christian punk (or, more accurately, a punk who was a Christian).

My hope is to give you some background on the genre, the major players, and how it sees itself in relation to the non-Christian punk scene. This won't be an exhaustive history—that would require a book (which is unfortunately not yet written). Instead, it will be this punk's take on Christian punk.

I grew up in Indiana, raised by Christian parents and attended our evangelical church two or three times a week. I wasn't forced to go—I was a Christian, enjoyed attending youth group events, and have a lot of good memories from that time period. While I can't say what the reasons were for others being Christian punks, my reasons caused a great deal of conflict in my adolescent mind. I wanted to rebel *and* fit in. I desired to be my own person—someone who was unique and didn't go along with the crowd. I wanted to showcase the music I listened to, while also please the god who I believed deserved my allegiance. Somehow my friends and I found a way to combine the punk rock idea of rebellion with Christian values. I was willing to rock the boat, but not too much.

Terminology

One of the inherent problems with Christian punk music is definitions. Once again, these come from my experiences over the years. While I'm no longer a Christian (for reasons entirely unrelated to the music), I worked in a Christian music store for two years in high school so I'd like to think I know something. But all you Christian punks out there feel free to tell me to fuck off.

So, what is Christian punk? How is it defined? Christian punk is music created by Christians, often with a message regarding Christian and Biblical themes. This music falls within the spectrum of what most would consider the structure of "punk" music. (Defining punk music is an entirely different conversation.)

But how can Christians be punk? Isn't punk about questioning authority? To a great extent, Christian punks would agree. Without getting too deep into theology, Christian punks would argue the world is run by sinful human beings, so it's important to always question the secular world and its motives at all levels. But when it comes to religion, Jesus is an exception. The Christian punk's take is that Jesus questioned authority and paid for it with his life. If Christians wish to truly follow in Jesus's steps, they believe they need to question everything except him, since he served as a perfect example (being the son of god). I have—on more than one occasion—heard people say, "Jesus was the original punk." (It's possible one of those people was me in high school.)

An often bandied-about term in the Christian music scene is "secular music." This is music that does not fall into the realm of Christian music—so basically anything else. Additionally, there are record labels that cater almost exclusively to Christians, another way in which the divide of Christian and secular music is cleaved. These labels (including Christian punk, hardcore, and metal ones) release albums primarily—although not always exclusively—made by Christian bands. They are distributed primarily in Christian bookstores, where one can buy a wide range of products—including a Bible, a devotional book specifically aimed at teen girls, and a CD by a Christian punk band. The idea of a store only selling Christian music is incredibly rare.

As mentioned earlier, there is a basic problem in what the primary identifier is of an individual involved in this scene: Are they first and foremost Christians who also happen to consider themselves punk? Or are they punks who are also Christians? Is the music punk with a "Christian message?" And what is that message? How do we define it? As one can tell, this was—and perhaps still is—a debate within the scene. Responses will vary from person to person. Trying to hitch together a lifestyle, a musical genre, a belief system, and a religion is complicated. It was certainly the source of a multitude of discussions from my time in that scene. Who are we and how do we define ourselves? When it deals with a message that some believe has eternal consequences, it's not quite as simple as feeling that one just wants to play some punk rock.

Early History of Christian Punk

The roots of Christian punk, like secular music, go back to rock'n'roll. While there were some smaller acts in the mid-1960s, Christian rock built up steam in the late '60s and early '70s with acts such as Larry Norman, The Resurrection Band, and Mylon Levefre. Most of these acts drew influences from blues and folk music. None of these artists were especially original, but their emergence as Christian rock bands was, in itself, groundbreaking. The stage was being set to show that, yes, it was possible for Christians to play what had been known in some Christian circles as "the devil's music." Indeed, as artists such as Larry Norman argued on his 1972 album *Only Visiting This Planet*: "Why should the devil have all the good music?"

After the introduction of rock and roll made by Christians, it was only a matter of time for them to start playing other genres of music. It's difficult to pin down an exact band that started the Christian punk scene, though. That's partially because the first semblance of punk in the Christian scene were bands drawing influence from new wave, a less threatening subgenre. Acts such as Undercover played a poppy sound akin to the Cars although they had an occasional fast beat. But Undercover seemed more interested in mixing keyboards into their tunes than anything distorted and aggressive. Altar Boys were another act drawing from punk's roots but with much more in common with the Replacements than the Sex Pistols or Ramones.

During the first decade of Christian punk, more bands emerged from Southern California than anywhere else. This wasn't just a coincidence, however. Music critic J. Edward Keyes writes in his blog that Undercover and Altar Boys formed:

> *"under the aegis of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, California—a laid-back, all-are-welcome type church…. Their connection to Calvary was crucial; the church, as unbelievable as it sounds, was kind of the Gilman Street of the Christian punk community, generating scores of tradition-breaking bands who thought Stryper and Petra sounded about as hokey and terrible as most of their mainstream compatriots did. It wasn't just a scene, it was a movement, as strong and—in its own world—as revolutionary to the church kids who heard it as the Ramones were to everyone else."*

A prominent exception to this great flood of Southern California Christian punk was Miami-based band The Lead. It's likely they were the first true Christian punk band. Formed in 1984, this three-piece traded off vocals between Julio Rey and Nina Llopis, which in some ways marked the act as even more of an anomaly. Not only were they a Christian punk band, but one that had a female vocalist, something not seen in many secular hardcore punk bands. They were far from the safer sound of their Californian Christian brethren. The Lead's musical style drew heavily from early Hüsker Dü: songs traded off vocalists that occasionally burst into screams and fast playing that bordered on thrash. It's not a stretch to imagine The Lead fitting in on the punk label SST. The reason that something like that would never happen is all in the lyrics.

In the 1970s and '80s, bands in the Christian scene (whether punk or not) saw their music as part of a ministry to bring non-Christians

I wanted to rebel and fit in. I was willing to rock the boat, but not too much.

Trying to hitch together a lifestyle, a musical genre, a belief system, and a religion is complicated.

to accept Jesus Christ as their savior. While their secular counterparts were singing about anarchy, nihilism, and the violence they saw in the scene, Undercover was penning tunes titled "God Rules," "Jesus Is the Best," and "Talk to God." Even The Lead, in all their musical legitimacy, wrote songs called "Kill Satan" and "Lead You to Repent." Like some non-Christian punk bands, The Lead waded into political topics, such as abortion (they were against it), although that was rare. The primary purpose of Christian punk was to spread the message of the Good News.

In fact, resistance to the lyrics of Christian bands is what led these acts to eventually form their own scene and industry. Unable to find acceptance amongst secular punk bands, Christian artists often booked shows at churches or Christian clubs. When they could find shows at the former, members of the churches were often quite surprised at the style they had agreed to let play in their house of worship. While the lyrics weren't objectionable, the music was a far cry from traditional hymns. Because of their "unique" style, bands weren't always invited back.

As the '80s progressed, more bands began to emerge as part of the Christian punk scene. A young California act, the Crucified, went on to become huge in the Christian scene, even as they sang, "I'm not a Christian punk." The aggressive sound on their albums *Take up Your Cross* and *Nailed* was akin to faster Minor Threat. Eventually the band made their way into a thrash punk sound a la Suicidal Tendencies. In fact, Christian heavy metal overshadowed Christian punk throughout the 1980s. This in itself isn't surprising, as the same was occurring in the secular scene. Mirroring their non-Christian counterparts, there wasn't any money to be made in punk, period, but especially in the late 1980s. It wouldn't be until the mid-'90s (about the same time punk "broke" in the secular scene) that Christian punk started to be noticed in the Christian scene.

Until then, however, there were a few exceptions. In small numbers, bands such as those on the DIY label Blonde Vinyl rang true. Started by Michael Knott in the late '80s, he signed numerous bands primarily based out of Southern California. While not all of them were explicitly punk, some of them—such as Knott's own act, Lifesavers—were influenced by punk and new wave. Other acts on Blonde Vinyl, such as Fluffy and Lust Control, played more directly in the genre. (The latter, according to Wikipedia, were "known for their explicit lyrical content, which is devoted to matters of sexual purity and sin, including abstinence, masturbation, pornography, sex ed, and related topics." As an innocent Christian teen, their lyrical content made me too uncomfortable to listen to them.)

Another exception to the rather unoriginal acts from the late '80s in Christian punk was Scaterd Few. Drawing from Bad Brains (they actually opened for H.R. on his 1990 solo tour) and Jane's Addiction, their music skirted the line of punk. As one review put it, Scaterd Few's sound "summoned a mad-scientist hybrid of dub, reggae, post-punk, and heavy metal." Lead singer Allan Aguirre's vocals "went from gothic moan to banshee yelp within the space of a single lyric. He sings like a man on fire, wild-eyed and crazy, yelping out each dire prophecy as if every word might be his last." It may be a looser connection to punk, but it's at least original, something that seemed sorely lacking in the Christian scene at the time. The few bands that did play punk in the Christian scene were unmemorable—Scaterd Few is one of the only acts to stand the test of time.

Christian Punk Takes Off

In the history of Christian punk, the importance of Tooth & Nail Records (T&N) cannot be understated. T&N was founded in 1993 by Brandon Ebel, a then-recent graduate of Oregon State University. Established in Southern California with money loaned by Ebel's grandfather, the label made its way to Seattle a few years after its birth. (For what it's worth T&N didn't just sign punk bands, although that seemed to be their bread and butter. They also released albums by bands that played shoegaze, grunge, power pop, and hardcore. Given my divergent tastes at the time, I bought almost all of it because I was so hungry for Christian music that expressed my rebellious feelings.)

As Joel Heng Hartse wrote in a 2014 article in *Christianity Today,* "Tooth & Nail created a safe, subversive space for Christian teenagers who felt torn between youth-group subculture and secular countercultures. The label's bands have been sonically diverse, exploring various corners of the indie rock, emo, punk, and hardcore genres. But what they have in common, as Ebel and many others have said, is feeling 'too Christian for non-Christians, and not Christian enough for Christians.'"

Some of this feeling was brought about by the acts that T&N signed. Some, such as Frodus, included members who weren't Christians. While the band didn't sing about Christianity, it still made me hesitant: should I be listening to this stuff? Would it be a bad influence on me? There were always rumors, too, in the Christian punk scene that were passed around in the pre-internet era through word of mouth: Joe Christmas got stoned at a Christian music festival, Zao smoked, and on it went.

Most of these bands were up front about their actions, though. Some bands' style of Christianity was far different than the more conservative one I practiced. But that didn't necessarily mean they weren't Christians. In contrast, there were always going to be Christian artists who acted perfect on the outside but didn't lead the most godly lives. This wasn't new in the Christian scene though: Amy Grant, Sandi Patty, and other adult contemporary artists had experiences with infidelity of which we were aware.

One thing that caused T&N to be so big is that their bands mirrored the mainstream sounds of the time. There were no 1970s Christian equivalent for Black Sabbath or early '80s answer to the secular sounds of Black Flag. By the time T&N came along, there was an alternative. Do you like NOFX or Rancid? They've got MXPX. Are you into Earth Crisis and Integrity? How about listening to Unashamed? In fact, T&N marketing drove directly to this point. Their catalogs and advertisements in Christian (and some secular) publications would have a RIYL (Recommended If You Like) list under a band's album. From this I was able to ascertain what acts I could give to my non-Christian friends in the hopes that it may spur in them an interest in Christianity.

I made a lot of friends through Christian music. I met one of my best friends in high school during our Spanish class. He had shirts for bands like Bad Brains, spiked hair, and a pair of jeans covered in safety pins. He hand-made his studded belt in the days before they were sold at Hot Topic and, frankly, he intimidated me.

"What is that?!" he exclaimed one day before class started. He pointed at the magazine ad I had placed in the front of the clear cover of my binder.

"Oh, uh, it's an ad for a Christian metal band," I replied nervously, but proud I had included the adjective "Christian."

"There's Christian metal?" he said, surprised.

"Oh yeah," I replied. "And Christian punk and hardcore, too." I couldn't believe I was speaking to him about Christianity.

From there we hit it off. He made me mix tapes that included bands like Agent Orange, Operation Ivy, and Youth Of Today. I made him ones that included Focused, Blenderhead, and MXPX. I wasn't

SON OF GOD
Tooth
GOOD
RELIGION
THE CRUCIFIED
MAXIMUM
ROCK+ROLL
HOLY
BIBLE
WWJD
FINE IRON
FRENZY

The primary purpose of Christian punk was to spread the message of the Good News. Resistance to the lyrics of Christian bands is what led these acts to eventually form their own scene and industry.

opposed to listening to secular punk music, but I hoped that listening to something a bit more godly might have a positive influence on my new friend.

And some months later, my friend and some of his buddies got "saved" after an altar call by the band Unashamed. For many of the hardcore bands, especially, using their platform as a means by which to ask people to come to god wasn't uncommon. For my friends who already were Christians, the genres of Christian punk, hardcore, and metal were what brought us all together.

With the emergence of Tooth & Nail there was an influx of Christian punk bands. Other Christian labels (Facedown, Screaming Giant, Takehold) tried to emulate T&N, but none matched T&N's dominance. This was partially due to the sales of a few bands (namely MXPX and the OC Supertones) as well as T&N's thorough distribution in Christian bookstores (where many Christian kids purchased their CDs and cassettes while their moms looked at the latest edition of the devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*).

It just so happened that as T&N blew up in popularity, ska was also getting big. Bands such as the OC Supertones and Five Iron Frenzy sold tons of records (at least for independent Christian artists) and drew packed shows. Others such as Squad Five-O drew comparisons to Operation Ivy with their ska punk sound. In the '90s, Christian bands began to fill in every conceivable subgenre of punk.

Working at a Christian music store

From 1995 to '97 I worked at a Christian music store (not bookstore—just music). I was in high school and the owner was only in his early twenties. It was a small joint—less than four hundred square feet. My boss wasn't necessarily into Christian punk, but he also didn't care if I played it in the store. However, this experience very much altered how I perceived Christian punk.

I spoke with distributors and salespeople and saw the business side of things. There were few DIY Christian punk labels, Boot 2 Head Records being one of the only ones I can recall. Most of T&N's materials were moving through EMI, one of the major labels (by the late '80s the vast majority of Christian music labels were at least distributed, if not owned by, secular major labels). I became more aware of the glut of Christian music on the market, especially Christian punk.

After a time, I soured on most Christian punk and hardcore and all their talk about one-sheets, sales points, and primary markets. I just wanted to listen to the music, but even much of that didn't impress me. When I worked, I began to play Christian adult contemporary music I remembered from my childhood. It severely confused the Christian punk kids who came in to buy the latest album by MXPX or Ghoti Hook. Seeing me, a teenager with a wallet chain, shaved head, and dog chain around his neck blaring Amy Grant threw them for a loop.

I met a lot of cool people working at the music store and had a lot of fun, but it became clear to me that by the late '90s the Christian punk scene had gone corporate (as though it had really ever been anything else). Nevertheless, lots of kids were still buying up any punk act that T&N was putting out. There had never really been a true DIY scene. Instead I looked to secular labels such as Dischord and bands like Fugazi for inspiration and philosophical ideas. Perhaps it was just my inundation with so much new music—or maybe the sound really wasn't as good as it used to be—but by the time I left the music store in 1997, I was burnt out on Christian punk. I continued to listen to some Christian punk and hardcore but also began to explore secular music. Although the RIYL lists were supposed to help fans of secular music find Christian music that would serve as a more "godly" alternative, I found it served to help me find more secular music. "Hmm. This chart says if you like Jawbox, you'll like Blenderhead. I wonder if I'd like Jawbox?" Internal conversations such as this occurred on more than one occasion and usually with a similar result: it wasn't long after that I found myself at a local record store buying a Jawbox (or similar band) CD.

Cornerstone

For about thirty years, every summer thousands would attend Cornerstone festival, one of the anchors of the Christian punk music scene. In *Witnessing Suburbia,* academic Eileen Luhr described Cornerstone as an:

> *"event that was clearly for believers—an affirmation of Christianity rather than a beacon for society. Jesus People USA, a residential religious community in Chicago, began Cornerstone at the Lake County, Illinois, fairgrounds in 1984. The community possessed ideal credentials for staging a Christian rock festival: it had a long history of outreach programs including a long-running magazine (Cornerstone) and a well-respected music ministry led by The Resurrection Band, one of the first Christian hard rock bands. By the late 1980s, the festival had established itself as an annual convention for young Christian rock fans. [It had also moved its location to a former pig farm located in Bushnell, Illinois, hours southwest of Chicago.] Advertisements for the event appeared in nearly every Christian music magazine, and enthusiastic first-person accounts of fans willing to endure interminable road trips, miserable camping accommodations, and adverse weather conditions for the opportunity to partake in three days of concerts by the genre's biggest acts became standard fare in fanzines."*

It was Christian music festivals (but especially Cornerstone) that allowed the Christian punk community to congregate in one place, hear all their favorite bands, and allow those acts to feel like superstars. Outside of Cornerstone, many of these bands hardly toured and when they did, they'd be lucky to draw one or two hundred fans a night. At Cornerstone they were gods, putting on shows for a thousand to fifteen hundred people, selling hundreds—if not thousands—of dollars of merch, while teens lined up for their autographs. Bands mingled with their fans and I was taken in by all of it just like everyone else.

I went to Cornerstone about five times in the 1990s and 2000s, sometimes as a fan and sometimes to sell merch for SC Distribution, a secular indie music distributor that happened to distribute a number of "cool" Christian artists. The three times I went in the '90s were the best, though. We camped in close proximity to one another in a field. The sun woke us each morning at 7 AM, after having fallen asleep five or six hours before. In the morning our tents became saunas. We escaped to try to catch a breeze as we sat under a canopy we pitched in an otherwise barren field. Together we would cram breakfast bars and cereal in our mouths, grumpily waking up. It was always too hot to sleep except late at night. During the day there was a lot of time to kill before the bands began. I bonded with my friends and got to learn more about many of them.

After three or four days at the fest, we made the six-hour drive home. We shared a snugly-packed vehicle of newly acquired music, camping gear, and sweat- and dirt-stained clothes. Stories were told of outrageous incidents. "Did you see when I stage-dove during Everdown's show?!" "I can't believe our friends got to open for

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Blaster The Rocket Man. That was so cool!" We were enmeshed together in a bonding experience. Going to Cornerstone was a ritual we shared for a number of years.

Early 2000s

By the late '90s the scene started to change and I don't mean that in a nostalgic, winsome way. Like many secular labels, in order to cash in, T&N started signing tons of pop punk bands, many of which weren't that great. They also started sub-labels such as Solid State (metal/hardcore), Uprok (rap/hip hop) and BEC (which stood for Brandon Ebel Company and put out a wide range of music).

As the glut of Christian punk bands filled the market, I felt overwhelmed. There was so much to listen to and so much of it was mediocre. (Or perhaps the bands I originally thought were so great weren't that great—but they were all I had, so they were everything.) As the twenty-first century began, the trends in the secular market changed, with Christian music following soon after. Emo became the next big thing and the market changed its focus. Christian punk wasn't the hot commodity anymore.

Christian hardcore and metalcore, however, did become pretty huge. Artists like Norma Jean, The Chariot, Underoath, and As I Lay Dying sold hundreds of thousands of records, primarily through Solid State, T&N's sub-label. Some of these bands jumped to secular record labels such as Roadrunner or Razor & Tie and most went on big tours such as OzzFest or with counterparts in the secular scene. The lines of separation between Christian and secular punk and hardcore became more difficult to define. Things had come a long way since the days of Undercover and The Lead. If it weren't for T&N's initial strike with punk, it's hard to imagine these bands ever having a chance at doing as well as they did.

I paid attention to some of those acts, but the influence of mall punk rubbed me the wrong way. Where did sincerity lay in a scene so filled with cookie-cutter punk and hardcore acts? The DIY aspect seemed to be nonexistent, if it had ever been anything anyway. Which leads me to….

DIY and Christian Punk

What about the DIY scene in Christian punk? Does such a thing exist at all? As mentioned earlier, there were few DIY labels in the secular sense. Frankly, there really isn't a need to keep a strict DIY philosophy to the degree there is in the secular scene. For the vast majority of the bands in Christian music, the primary goal is to save souls. The larger the market the better. Not too many people want anything that might limit their audience—they want to cast a wide net.

That's not to say that the primary goal of all Christian bands is to minister to the lost. This is where the division of terminology arose. Bands that saw themselves as a ministry would often label themselves as Christian bands. But bands that were primarily interested in playing music were often seen as Christians in a band. The former were often the ones who made the money for labels like T&N, but the latter were the groups that won more critical acclaim. The few artists in the Christian scene who—often influenced by secular DIY labels—were interested in being on an "indie" would shoot for a secular indie, or occasionally sign with T&N. With the latter they matched the level whereby they could secure some notoriety and distribution, but also know they weren't owned by one of the majors (just distributed by one of them).

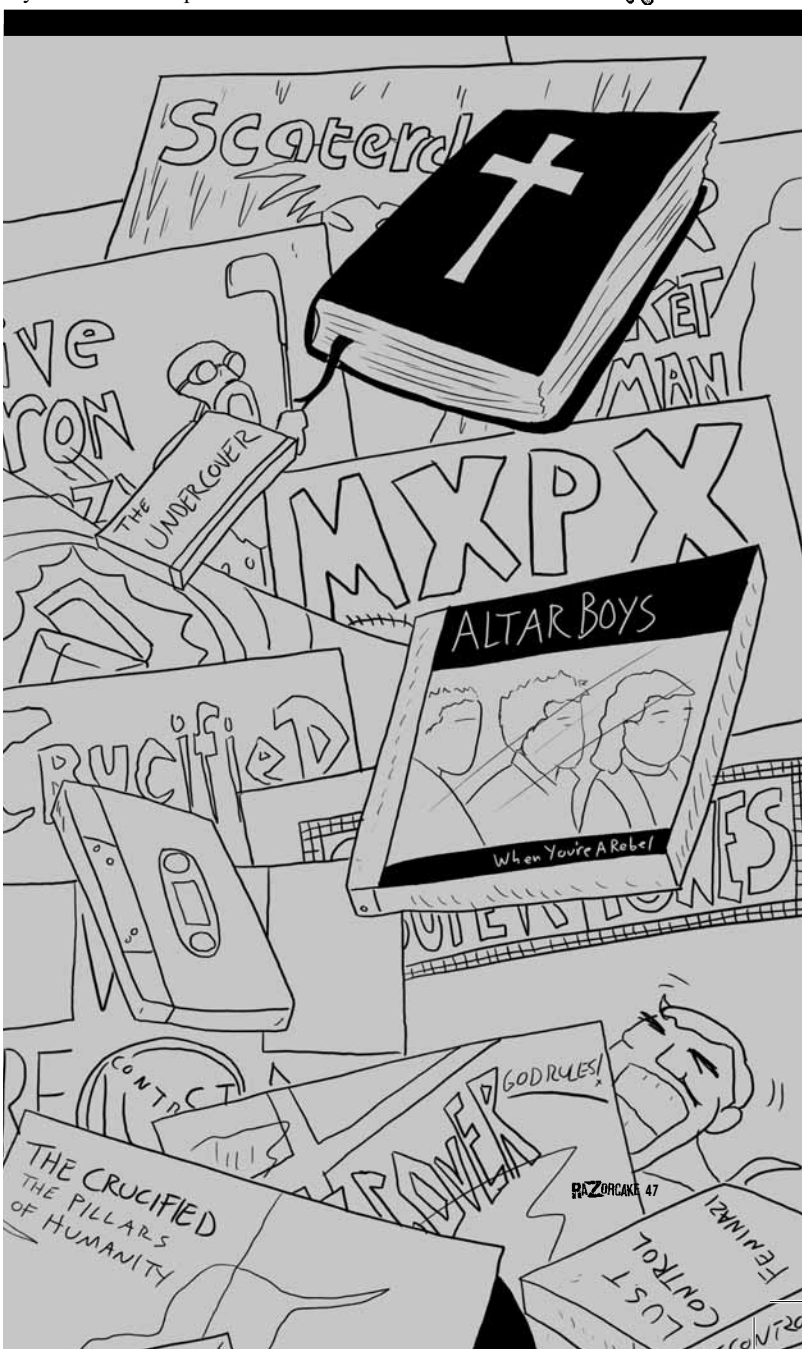
Conclusion

For many of my Christian punk friends, our relationships with god changed over the years. The fire we once had in our hearts changed into something less intense, or in the case of myself and some of my other friends, it has ceased entirely. But this happened years after we left high school and college, when there wasn't much stigma with becoming agnostic or atheist.

I still own some Christian music and listen to it from time to time. There are some great bands out there comprised of Christians who, on occasion, sing about their faith or god, but can do it in a way that's not preaching. Acts such as Common Children, The Prayer Chain, or Starflyer 59 still get semi-regular rotation by me. I'm not sure what that magic line is where I'll accept Woven Hand (an alt-rock country act whose lyrics are incredibly religious) but cringe when I listen to Crux. I love their music, but their lyrics spend a lot of time on right-wing politics:

Why do you lie to us? Why do you lie to us?
By teaching in school Christianity has died.
Why do you lie to us? Why do you lie to us?
By handing out condoms; safe sex is a lie.

To be honest, I struggled writing this article. It brought back a lot of memories from my teen years—many not so good. Now that I'm not a Christian, it's hard to wonder who that person was who was so excited about Christian punk and hardcore. When I started writing this piece I listened to some of the old bands again—bands I hadn't thought about in ten or fifteen years. When I did so, all I heard were the acts they were ripping off: Hüsker Dü, Danzig, Billy Idol. Were these bands consciously wanting to sound like these "secular" artists, to create a "safe" alternative to the scary world of the unsaved? Or were they using their music as a means to save souls? Whatever the case, halfway through listening to "Jesus Is Number One" by Altar Boys, I decided to listen to the Replacements song "Androgynous" and think about how far I've come since those days when I labeled myself a Christian punk.



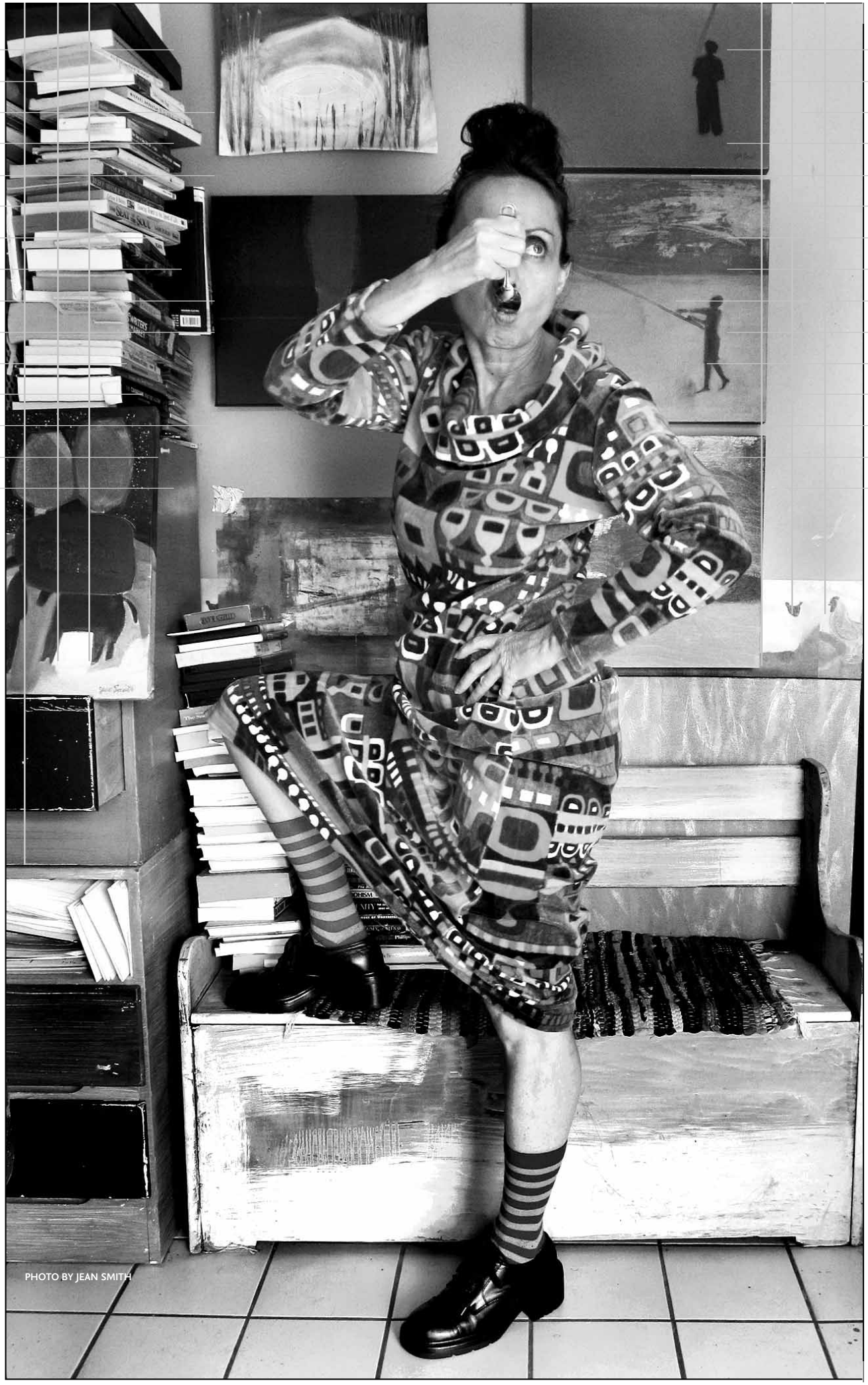


PHOTO BY JEAN SMITH

A CONVERSATION WITH JEAN SMITH OF MECCA NORMAL

AGEING IS WEIRD

INTERVIEW BY
DAVID ENSMINGER

PHOTOS BY
JEAN SMITH, JEFF SMITH, SNORKEL, JUDITH BAUMANN, AND SEAN RAGGETT

LAYOUT BY
LAUREN MEASURE

Jean Smith is half of the powerful, prolific, and poetry-infused duo Mecca Normal, whose uncanny, bare-boned punk helped paved the way for riot grrrl's forceful attack on gender norms and its embodiment of DIY punk production. Her one-of-a-kind vocal delivery, postmodern storytelling, and incisive intimacy truly make her a maverick. Stretching over thirteen albums alongside musical partner David Lester, who channels power chords and jazz riffs with ease and gusto, the two have plowed through the decades since the mid-'80s, leaving behind output that complicates and blurs the boundaries between genres.

Some may wonder if the songs are more akin to spoken word—monologues set to music, soundtracks of an inner-cinema of consciousness at work, or simply punk rock that resists tired formulas and well-worn expectations.

On seminal albums like Jarred Up, their music seems to hearken back to the wide-open days of the late 1970s. One may glean sonic specks of the rambling poetics of John Cooper Clarke; the agonizing art brut of Lydia Lunch; the feminism and unconventional style of Au Pairs and Kleenex; portions of Gang Of Four's politics (in which leisure and domesticity is put under the microscope as much as economic systems); the compressed and spare rhythmic roil of Young Marble Giants; and even Crass's commitment to overturn the old world order.

Yet the band's sometimes choppy, electric-blaze guitar work also feels akin to Billy Bragg's punchier moments, and Jean's lyrical onslaught—highly personalized narratives that spare no detail—physical, spiritual, and sexual—plainly foreshadowed the templates of Bikini Kill, Bratmobile, and others. Meanwhile, her ongoing painting and novels have earned her much praise and a cult following.

David: Many people draw direct links between Mecca Normal and riot grrrl, although I might draw a stronger line between the band and the work of PJ Harvey—albums like *Flood Plain* and her *4-Track Demos*, made the same year, seem like partners in creative crime. If you feel part of a lineage, what is it?

Jean: I don't feel any particular shared lineage or affinity with PJ Harvey. It could be timing. We were fully immersed in writing, recording, and touring. Mecca Normal is a conversation between a man and a woman who aren't romantically connected. Her music serves a very different function for her singing; her guitar typically comes down to accommodate the singing. The whole is a singular demonstration of intensity produced by a solo operator. Listening to "Man-Size" as I write this. For all the rough edges, her orchestration is pretty slick. Nope, I just don't see the connection. She's a good guitar player, so that's good! She sounds like Patti Smith if Patti Smith could play the guitar, but then again, I'm not a big Patti Smith fan either.

David: I intended, what legacy do you *actually feel part of*—if not her or Patti Smith? Do you feel, as writers suggest, part of the riot grrrl movement?

Jean: I feel directly inspired by the women in and around the London punk scene in the late '70s. Raincoats, Au Pairs, Slits, Crass, Poison Girls, X-Ray Spex, Hazel O'Connor. David lived—and squatted—in London during that time. He had a girlfriend who was in a punk band. He managed to see a few of these bands so he pointed me in this direction. He bought me a lot of these records in the early '80s and we started Mecca Normal in 1984. I had a portable cassette deck and I went down to the industrial part of the waterfront in Vancouver in my 1970-something Toyota Corolla and sang along to "Warrior in Woolworths" (X-Ray Spex) and "Lola" (Raincoats) playing on a tape in the car stereo and recorded myself on the portable tape deck. I still have that tape!

We were well underway when riot grrrl started. I'd been married and divorced, basically. I wasn't a "girl" at all and I'd done my fair share of educating people about the "political incorrectness" of calling women girls, so I was hardly going to join anything with "girl" in it. Plus, I don't join anything anyway.

Mecca Normal is an acknowledged inspiration to the co-founders of riot grrrl. Kathleen Hanna has said there wouldn't be a Bikini Kill if there wasn't a Mecca Normal. When *Fader* asked who had influenced her in the early days, Kathleen said, "Lyrically, Jean Smith from Mecca Normal. She was really poetic and had feminist ideas at the core of a lot of her songs and she wasn't ashamed of it. She wrote a song about street harassment and

MECCA NORMAL WAS AN URGE TO AGITATE. TO EDUCATE ON EVERYTHING FROM SEXISM AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN TO POVERTY, HOUSING RIGHTS, AND THE WOES OF CAPITALISM.

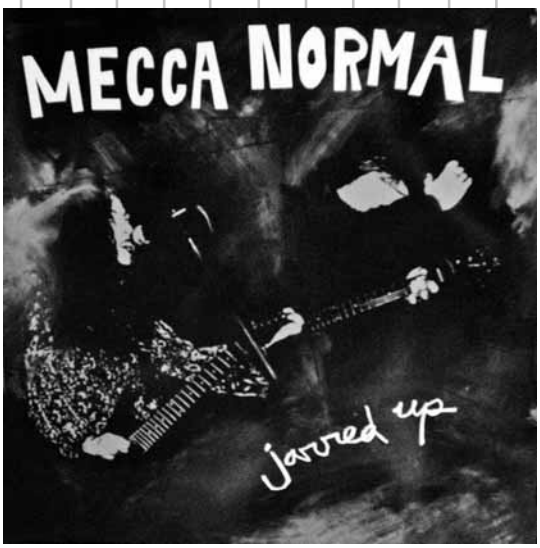
the male gaze, and she played at a feminist art gallery that my friend and I started. And when I saw her, I was just like, that's it. I'm done."

I mean, it's a bit weird, all these years later, to still be describing myself as an inspiration to founders of riot grrrl and a much better known musician, but I set myself up for that. That's what we wanted to do from the very beginning! That was our specific purpose—to inspire young women to form bands with their friends, to write, and to sing lyrics about their experience.

David: In a *Wondering Sound* interview you told Tobi Vail, "We're minuscule on the radar of mainstream people," but in essence, has this allowed a certain kind of anonymity and freedom to pursue music without a sense of having to please?

Jean: Well, Mecca Normal was never saddled with the need to please, that's for sure! It was an urge to agitate. And to educate on everything from sexism and violence against women to poverty, housing rights, and the woes of capitalism. I come from a creative background. Both parents are painters. Abstract expressionists. No need to please involved there! I grew up listening to their jazz, which included Bill Evans, Oscar Peterson, Keith Jarrett, et cetera. A fair few pianists, not so many vocalists. Jazz never struck me as a need to please situation either. It felt highly impulsive and hinged to the emotional landscape of the individual.

Concurrently, I was exposed to the formulation of the advertising industry because my father was an ad agency art director (circa *Mad Men*) who went from Vancouver to N.Y.C. to work with top photographers from *Vogue*, top models. So, I was behind the scenes in the very need-to-please world of illusion that is advertising—where the final product is a highly-contrived manipulation with a specific purpose: to sell shit to people. From a very early age, I watched how models were used. How light and language were used. How psychological weaknesses were exploited— because these things were talked about and demonstrated. I've always been conscious that mystery is very appealing to the consumer. Take your Jandeks or your Salingers, for instance. I've always gone out of my way to say way more than necessary and to give the impression of being both angry and completely transparent—all of which is distasteful, especially in a woman. Generating this stance has protected us from excessive interest and allowed us to move freely in both physical and creative realms. No one is depending on us to make a living, like a road crew or a label.



There's this cool little space you can carve out for yourself if you're not hell bent on being popular or making a bunch of money. It has more to do with functioning within a community of like-minded people than it does fortune and fame. It has more to do with the reason for making art, a reason other than fame. Although, having said all that, I would still like things to be easier for Dave and me financially, but I feel there's a big shove from younger generations that older people should just go away because they had their turn and now they're just taking up space and what could they possibly have to say that would be interesting? It's weird, because older people don't want to draw attention to their age. We're all supposed to be trying our damnedest to cover up any signs of ageing. From grey hair to wrinkles, to be old is very, very, very bad! To be an older person is a cultural taboo. You are a drag. Your body is disgusting. For young people, it's all out in the open. You hear them mocking older people, talking about how irritating they are. It's a prejudice that's not being acknowledged or challenged along with racism, gender issues, and feminism. I think it's too scary for most older people. I think they're happy to be invisible to avoid being abused and exploited by younger people. Humans have a nasty tendency to pick on the vulnerable.

I saw a thread on my Facebook feed written by a young woman who does sex work. She asked her friends if they would have sex with a disgusting old man for five thousand dollars. Most were grossed out, but said they would. Some said no way. I wanted to ask how old she was talking about, but to them, in their early twenties, I guess that could be a guy in his forties, fifties, sixties or who knows? Just the idea that prostitutes are loath to take five thousand dollars to have sex with a disgusting "old man" is interesting. Although, I totally recall when I was in my early forties, the idea of having sex with a fifty-year-old man was disgusting, but then when it happened—some years later—it wasn't too bad! Ageing is weird.

David: I almost want to title this interview "Ageing Is Weird." It's so true, for me as well.

Jean: As a musician—or someone culturally significant in a previous era—when you get into your fifties, especially as a woman, people start acting like your time was some other time, except that you're still standing there with a bunch of ideas and the need to make work and money, but suddenly it's like you're a museum piece. There's this strange assumption that you have always been old and therefore you know how to be old, that you must know how to get what you need, that you have it all together, because that was the gist of it all, right? You get your education or training, make your way upwards through a profession, build equity, have the family, and then you're somehow set. None of this is true if you deviate from the start and go in another direction—like starting a band based in confronting social injustices. I own nothing. No car, no house. Nothing valuable. I don't have a partner or kids. I don't stand to inherit any particularly large amount. I'll be selling my parents' 1970-something single-wide trailer after they die and splitting the proceeds with my brother.

PHOTO BY SNORKEL

I spent most of my time since 2000 writing novels and working part time. I was fortunate to have several businesses I worked at close, so I was eligible for unemployment insurance. That was perfect. I got a lot of writing done. I have a literary agent working on selling one of them to a publisher and I've just started another one.

And, in April, I quit my part time job to paint full time. The part time job wasn't working out. It was originally just sort of an off-hand comment borne out of desperation. I said I'd rather just paint five one-hundred-dollar paintings a day and sell them on Facebook. It turns out that there is a market for the portraits I've been doing. I wasn't planning on doing portraits for one hundred dollars, because they should be significantly higher, but due to the crossed wires on what I said I was going to paint, people started snapping up the portraits as soon as I posted them, so I stuck with it and it continues to be a viable way to make a living. I'm making ends meet painting one-hundred-dollar portraits. I've sold over sixty paintings from my Facebook page in the past six months. I like the direct-from-the-artist model—skip the art dealers and galleries—and making them a price that regular people can actually afford.

I would say this is one of the happiest times in my life. To be making and selling art—enough to live on—it's incredible! I started painting self-portraits when I was thirteen and have continued over the years. I've tried to paint at least one a year every year since.

I tapped into capturing micro-expressions and nuances of emotion in the same way I might reveal them in a story. I paint from photographs I like, mostly women. Some of them are people you might know of, but I'm not all caught up in realistic representations of specific people. Famous people have better photos of themselves! Better lighting! If I'm painting a model in a traditional fashion photo, there is something about that revealed in my painting—where the makeup meets bare skin, an awareness that is not quite hidden. I have painted quite a few of a particular trans model and many others are intentionally ungendered.

For me, it's about the act of painting more than the final evidence of that time spent painting. In any one painting, there might be many variations that occur before I finally stopped. With painting, it's knowing when to stop. My subject's character begins to form when I start painting. I edit constantly, changing intensity around the mouth and the eyes, altering the style, combining loose and realistic features, forcing the viewer's brain to fill in missing details—honing an impression of who they are becoming, who I'm making them.

I had no idea there was a market for faces; anonymous faces which are more about the actual paint—the composition, style, color—and human emotions, I suppose, than any sort of urge to depict a specific face. I've sold paintings to instructors from the Yale School of Art and the Art Institute of Chicago, painters whose work has been exhibited in the Museum of Modern Art and the Whitney Biennial, and by art critics for *Artforum* and the *Winnipeg Free Press*. Johanna Fateman—formerly of Le Tigre—has been really enthusiastic and helpful in pointing artists she knows in my direction. Julie Dioron and Rose Melberg have bought them.

David: For half a decade, you worked at Curves and more recently within the food industry, working via a façade or persona so you can make the art you want, on the terms you desire. But, in what ways does the emphasis on bodily health, attention to nutrition, and fulfilling art intersect in unsuspecting ways in your life?

Jean: I started weightlifting in 1979, so I recently celebrated thirty-five years working out in community gyms in Vancouver. It's the type of workout that suits me. Aggressive, solo, ego-based, and fast. I was nineteen when I started, and I don't recall any other women at the facility I went to. Prior to that, I'd been a ski instructor. My mother was very health-conscious, and she shared a lot of

information about nutrition with me as a kid. To this day, I eat what I need to eat, loosely based on the original food guide.

The Curves job was great because it was very physical. It involved teaching and training both staff and clients, and it was very social. I could talk about the novels I was writing and, at that time, song lyrics were directly out of those novels. Working at the gourmet food store was kind of depressing. Most of my co-workers were all wrapped up in what was delicious and not what was healthy. So, I tried to keep quiet about my beliefs. If I told someone I had kale for dinner after the gym, they'd look at me like I was less than something on the bottom of their shoe. The enemy.

As far as how being creative and maintaining a healthy lifestyle intersect in unsuspecting ways, I'd have to ask, unsuspecting to whom? I've been using physical activity and nutrition to maintain mental and physical health so long that nothing about the benefits are unexpected.

When I turned forty, I quit drinking. At that point I had to sort of reframe daily life with more emphasis on nutrition and getting to the gym. It was helpful to work at a gym for some of those years!

David: You opened for Fugazi—and have recognized the limited audience you might speak to, as if "preaching to the choir"—but yet Ian MacKaye himself told me, "It's not preaching to the converted that's important, it's what the converted do. I have no problem with preaching to the converted, because then the converted can go out and kick some ass." Would you agree?

Jean: Opening for Fugazi was definitely not preaching to the choir for us! I don't think I've ever talked about kicking ass. I started Mecca Normal specifically to change the world. To encourage young women to get together with their friends and start bands in which they wrote and performed lyrics about their experiences as women in music and society. This happened. It was called riot grrrl. If that's preaching to the converted so the converted can go out and kick some ass—then yes.

David: Vic Bondi of Articles Of Faith says he expects backlash against women if Hillary Clinton becomes President, just as racism and intolerance recently peaked under Obama's two terms. Your bandmate David told Tobi, "In terms of misogyny and the state of sexism in the world … it's frightening that very little has changed"—might her presence as president, even disregarding her politics, reveal an ugly side of North American life?

Jean: Backlash against women? Women are in the position of perpetual backlash every fucking day of their lives in every part of the world. Are the existing conditions of sexism going to be exposed and attended to during a Clinton administration? Ideally. Is that going to make some men angry? Yes. When the systemic oppression of women is addressed, it seems likely that some men will mock and attack women more openly, but it won't be like we didn't know that this is already a pervasive, underlying mindset. When men are frightened or hurt they tend to get angry and violent. Looking for connections between any sort of peak in racism during the Obama administration is complex. The criminalization of black life has a much longer arc.

David: By the 1990s, you jumped deeply into writing and began focusing on tightened language that could, as you told Tobi, "transcend and almost become invisible." In turn, did that effect your songwriting style as well—a newfound attention to both detail and condensed narratives? For me, I felt that might be apparent on songs like "1922" and the vivid, vulnerable song/vignette "Attraction Is Ephemeral," which made my mind recall Ernest Hemingway or Raymond Carver.

Jean: Thanks for mentioning Raymond Carver! He's one of my favorite writers. "1922" is from 2006's *The Observer* which is basically an album about my online dating adventures. As for how it and "Attraction Is Ephemeral" were written, they feel very similar in their storytelling nature. "1922" is more abstract even though it involves a world-building aspect. Actually, I guess both songs place the characters in physical situations. Both songs express a sense of injustice at the way women are treated by men.

In "Attraction," it's within a male/female relationship dynamic, when one person—the man—is of a professional class and the other—the woman—is of an artist class. In "1922" we go back to when women had no clout as artists. To a time when it was all about how the male artist dominated the women in his life. The two songs are bookends, in a way, describing nuances of the over-arching condition that feminism addresses.

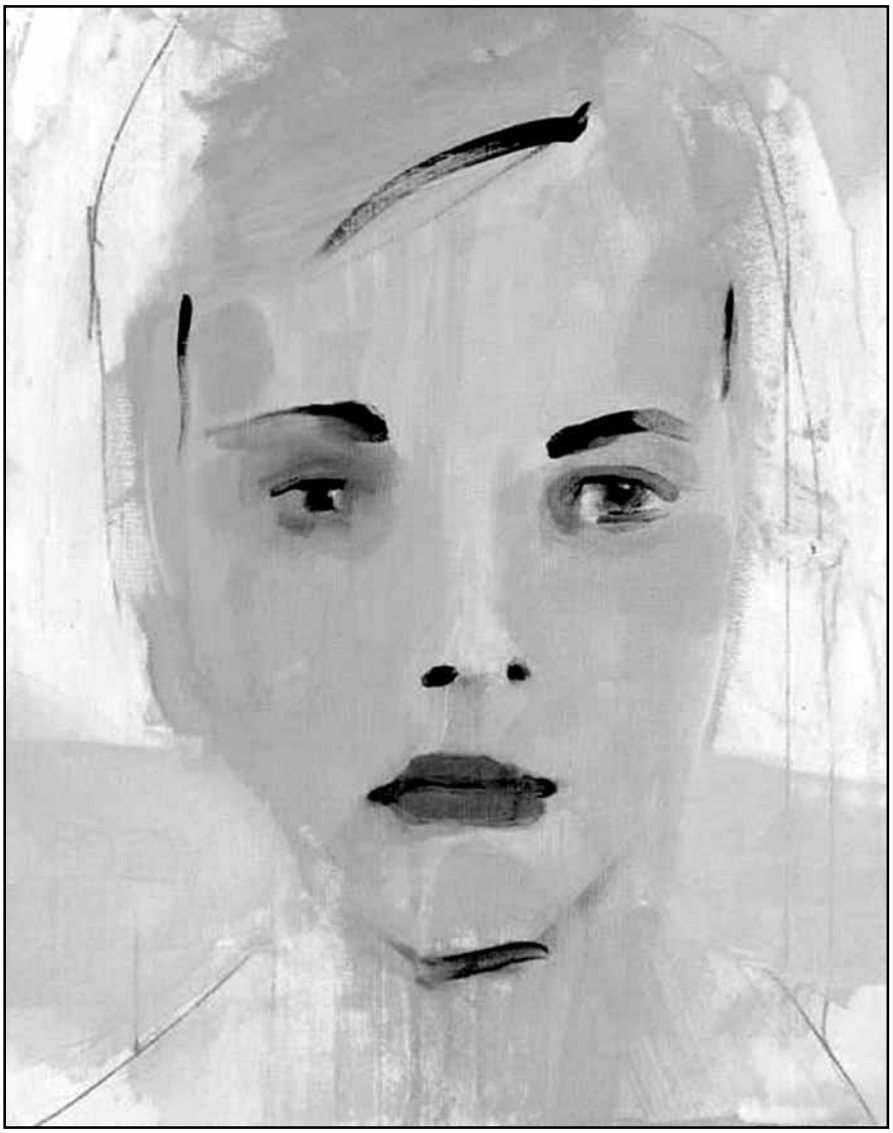
I wrote "1922" while David played guitar. With "Attraction" I had the lyrics typed out before we began playing. I always record what we do so we can go from what happened in the first take, which is often very close to how we want it. I have tapes, and now files, of almost every one of our rehearsals. I need a variety of ways to write good songs. I'd hate it if it was formulaic. I will say that some of our best songs are written on the first time through, which is why I wish we had a better way to record. I'd love to have a great studio set up.

David: I know David's book about Emma Goldman (A yet-to-be-titled graphic novel about the last year in the life of anarchist Emma Goldman) is partly about documenting the life of a radical who ended up in Toronto, but also spent fifty years struggling for basic human rights. As someone who has also spent decades defining—and re-defining—your music, feminism, and sense of anarchism, does her life or work mean much to you as well?

Jean: David and I are very different people. I'm more into either documenting my own

PHOTO BY JUDITH BAUMANN

THERE'S THIS STRANGE ASSUMPTION THAT YOU HAVE ALWAYS BEEN OLD AND THEREFORE YOU KNOW HOW TO BE OLD, THAT YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO GET WHAT YOU NEED, THAT YOU HAVE IT ALL TOGETHER.



NO HAT#79, JEAN SMITH

experiences or inventing characters to use in the process of clarifying thoughts about personalities in relation to society and other personalities. The portrait paintings I'm doing now are an extension of the way I build and use characters in novels and songs. I get to know them by constructing them and defining them through linguistic, musical, and visual intensities.

David, I believe, is more interested in re-framing and expressing aspects of existing history.

I wrote and directed a stage adaption for David's last graphic novel. *The Listener* is about a political artist who went to Europe to regroup after an unsettling incident. She met an elderly couple who told her a little-known story about how Hitler came to power. It was great to go into classrooms and libraries and run through our live performance in character and then, at the end, we sort of fall out of character and become Mecca Normal.

Emma Goldman's life and work don't mean anything to me. I'm not planning on playing the role of a dumpy, unattractive woman wearing nineteen-whatever garb. So, I'm not sure what's up with that. We haven't really talked about creating a stage adaptation for this book. It seems unlikely.

David: You've worked with a spate of labels, including K, Matador, and Kill Rock Stars. Do you see a place for such labels in the future, or were they, in some ways, a means to an end? Now that a band can Periscope (live video streaming) their live gigs in real-time and record an entire album on GarageBand and disseminate it on Bandcamp—where Dischord just dumped their whole catalog—are labels passé?

Jean: I'd say the communities around K Records were solid around the time we were on the label, as were what we knew of the Matador community. Maybe less with them—being on the west coast made it different for us—but I think there was some sense of community there. The type of discussion that swirls around labels would be missed. Albeit, conversation in recent years seems to be about differences and difficulties.

Bands have been able to record and manufacture albums on their own, as we did. It's really about the means of dissemination and promotion. That's what you need a label for. You need a way to get it out there, which if that's Bandcamp, then you need a way to get it to stand out and that's usually what the label can generate with the media. It always looks better to have someone else saying how great your band is, even when it's your label. They are your label because they love what you do, so losing that element is a hindrance on many levels.

We tend to be fairly DIY on the publicity side of things—sending out press releases and setting up interviews, getting content out there to promote our music and other projects. We can't afford to tour extensively because not enough people come out to our shows. Everything changed for almost everyone around 2000, with Napster and file sharing, and fewer people going out to shows

ORGANIZE AND ARISE

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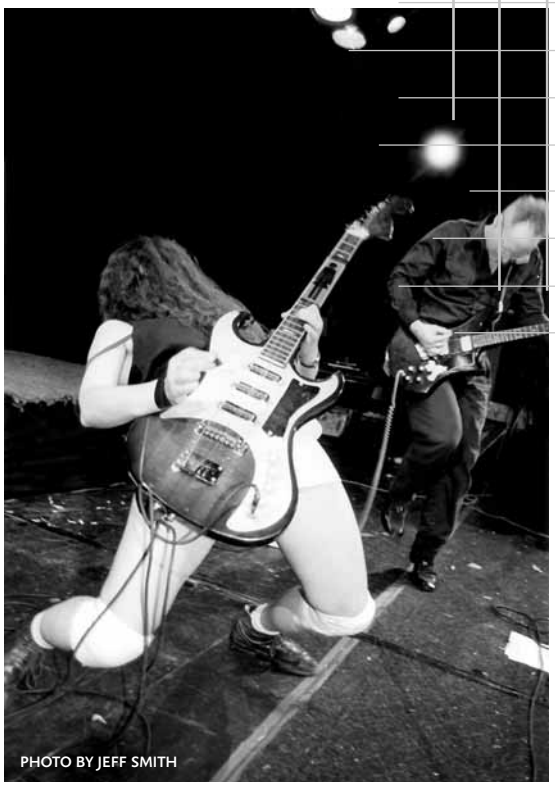


PHOTO BY JEFF SMITH

FROM TIME TO TIME, THIRTY YEARS AND SIXTEEN ALBUMS LATER, I STILL WONDER IF I'VE PAID MY DUES.

in general. We were significant at a certain point within a few different communities, but we didn't want to stop after that point. We didn't come to a natural end point and move on to other professions. I didn't have a back-up plan, and any success Mecca Normal had was a total surprise. Getting a four out of five star review—and named a "Band to Watch" along with Radiohead and Liz Phair in *Rolling Stone*—didn't see it coming.

David: Your life is a panorama of output—a painting carer, a writing career, then the band's continuum … but how do you stay afloat in the twenty-first century, when making art in a digital world can be difficult, at best?

Jean: I spend a lot of time online—on social media, writing novels, updating various pages and, now, selling paintings. I create and maintain WordPress websites for various projects. I've made hundreds of videos and posted them on YouTube and Vimeo. But, until now—with the paintings— nothing has really worked in terms of attracting enough people to make a living. Not that money is at the root of what I do, but I am currently painting to avoid taking another part time job in retail. The last job was in a Home Depot garden center and, as a part time employee, they had me scheduled seven days in a row for 5:00 AM shifts to haul water for about twice as many hours as I needed or wanted. I told them I wasn't available at that time of day, every day of the week. They ignored me. So I quit.

The paintings were starting to take off, and I decided to keep painting. Jen, of the band Submission Hold, called the paintings "a perfect storm" when I started selling between nine and twelve a month. It's the low price and something about the faces that resonate with people—which I think has a lot to do with the time spent and the intensity of writing about characters in my novels. When you have to make that leap from imagination to words, you formulate something that will work for your readers.

David: The band has waned a bit here and there over the years, and you've both jumped to side projects, but how do you maintain that core productivity and freshness?

Jean: David and I have an excellent creative partnership. When interest in Mecca Normal fell off, we both had areas we wanted to put attention into. For him it's graphic novels and for me it was writing. As a woman, when I got into my fifties I started to feel invisible. In music especially, it's always about the new band. Young bands. Young women. When you're in your fifties, no one really cares what you're up to unless you've already made it somehow. Unless you're Melissa Etheridge or someone, it's pretty hopeless. I could be bitter, but we didn't set out to be part of any existing system or to succeed in any other way than in changing the world—which we did. I've never felt like my creativity had to manifest only through music.

Since there is no money coming my way from any sort of royalties or sales and no money from anything I write, I was a bit stuck in having to take part time jobs where I was lucky enough to be hired as an older person. I don't have an income otherwise. That's what's been so great about the paintings selling and why I'm hoping I can find a way to make it continue. If I can't, I have to work in a store or… I don't know, really. Jobs are tight here in Vancouver and it's a very expensive city, an ongoing concern since I rent. I have to earn about one thousand USD every month somehow. I have eight more years before I can collect the old age pension. So, if people aren't interested in my band—even though we still put out albums and are into touring and my voice is probably better than ever, but we're excluded because I have been alive too long to be of interest….

David: How much of the band was shaped by the particular politics and music of Vancouver, not just the legacy of Subhumans, DOA, Pointed Sticks, Modernettes, Dishrags, et cetera?

Jean: Mecca Normal started because there were very few women in bands at the time Dave and I were going to shows in the early '80s—after the era you refer to. The politics that swirled around the scene definitely infused us with a specific awareness, but feminism was missing from the equation. It was weird because the Vancouver punk scene was sort of based off London, I'd say, and the London scene had a lot of women in it. Vancouver was pretty much a four-guys-on-stage thing and when we started doing shows people didn't like us. So we went on tour and found that people in other cities really liked us. We did two nights in an anarchist café in Montreal and got standing ovations—it was positively weird! San Francisco, Los Angeles, and New York City were great! If we'd fit into the scene in Vancouver, we might not have left and found what was out there beyond the city we both grew up in. When we got a lousy review in *MRR*, I realized we weren't going to be able to contribute to the hardcore scene. What we found was infinitely more interesting. It's all about tenacity and being flexible within parameters that may need to be adjusted over time.

We'd only played a handful of shows at the point when we went into a studio in 1985 to mix tapes we'd made on our Fostex four-track in a garage. After we released our first album on our record label, someone "in the scene" said we shouldn't have released it because there were bands more deserving than us. I recall someone saying that we hadn't paid our dues. That phrase really stuck with me. From time to time, thirty years and sixteen albums later, I still wonder if I've paid my dues.

“We’re not high and mighty about anything.”

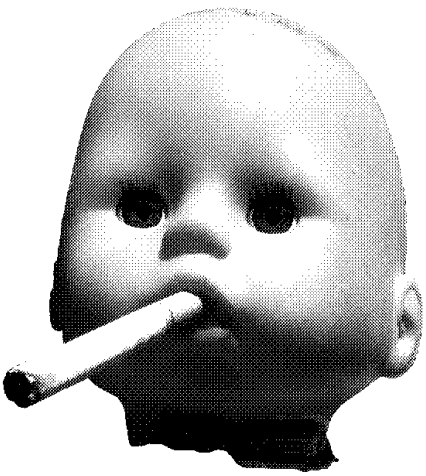
Interview and introduction by Todd Taylor
Transcription by Griffin Wynne
Photos and layout by Matt Average

SUN

Tommas: *Bass*
Fabian: *Drums*
Will: *Guitar*
Peter: *Guitar, Sings*

BATHER

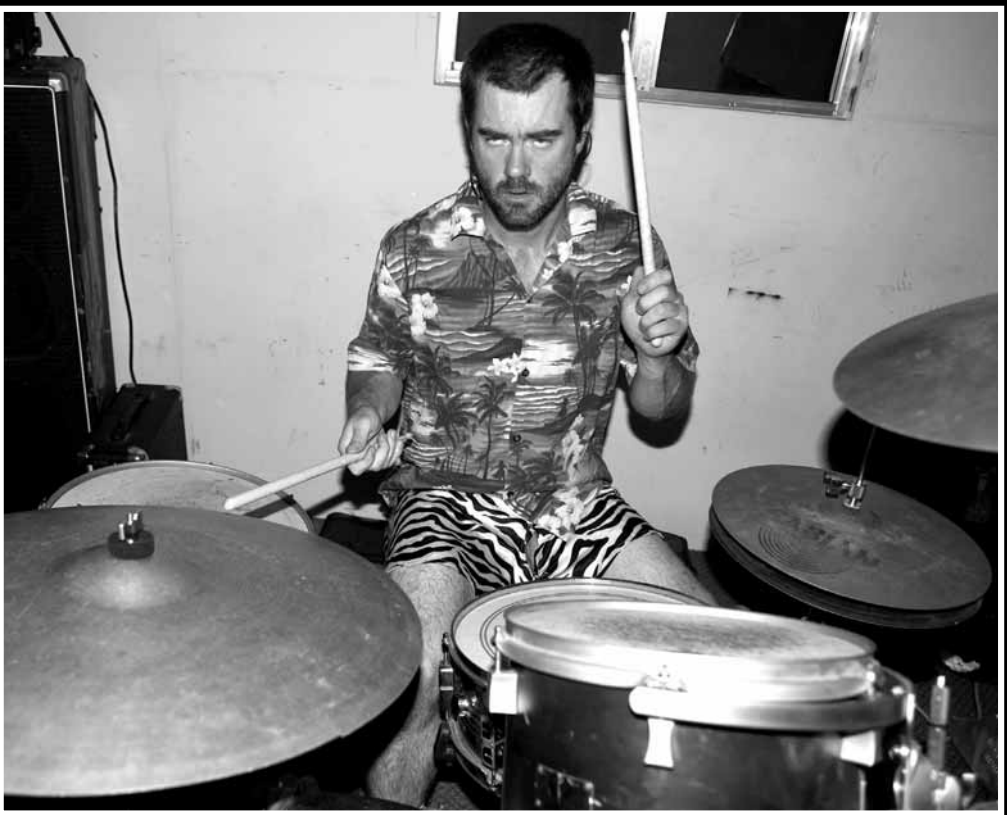
Tommas is a big, fat fuckin' liar. He lied to me repeatedly a decade ago when I interviewed him in Gorilla Angreb. It turns out Peter Bonneman (Amdi Petersens Armé, No Hope For The Kids) wasn't a teenage drug offender and hard-time incarcerated graffiti artist. Peter's no better. "Spild Af Vinyl" does not actually mean "large dildo manufacturing corporation" in Danish. I'm saying this because I had faulty ammunition going into this interview with Sun Bather, a band comprised of two Danes, a German, and Santa Cruzian. My research confidence was supremely shaken. Was it true that Will (Born/Dead, Red Dons) grew up in the Children of God cult and had a torn muscle in his chest from being punched? Did Fabian (Burial) ever give up or give in? Is "Sun Bather" Danish for "Defenders of Disneyland"? Why the flute? All of those questions get answered, but who knows what new falsehoods have been forged.



Here's what I do know. Sun Bather is important rock. When some musicians slow down the tempo, they just suck and get boring. However, Sun Bather stretches out on a nice little deck of garage rock. They take the waggling swagger of the Cramps; the taut, steel airiness of The Estranged; the "What? Yeah!" of Black Randy And The Metrosquad to heat that in the white-hot embers of all four members' extensive musical pedigrees. I cannot recommend their two 7"s and 12"EP enough.

Ah, screw it. There's no need for a music history lesson here. You don't need to know any of that. Pull out a fold-up foil neck tanner, ratchet up the rays, and let Sun Bather's skin cancer music bronze you.

Todd: I have a feeling a lot of us have been into playing punk rock or being around punk rock for a while. What are you ages?
Tommas: I just turned forty.
Fabian: Thirty six.
Peter: Forty one.
Will: Thirty five.
Todd: This is a direct quote from Will: "There are just a few people that are more dedicated to this lifestyle than most others and have the integrity to do what we like. I'm really proud to say that we have never changed our ideals or musical style to suit anyone's tastes but our own." How do you all practice punk in a way that differs from the outside world's perception of it?
Tommas: That's very deep. [Everyone laughs.] I'm not thinking in "punk terms" all the time. This is just, it's a rock and roll band. I think. But we've played in punk rock bands and discovered punk many, many years ago. But I don't wake up in the morning and think about punk.
Todd: Do you think you have ideals that are different from people's traditional perceptions of punk rock—more positive models where you have incorporated punk so much into your life, you don't need to think about it anymore—but it's still there.
Tommas: I have a *huge* record collection of punk rock stuff. [laughs] I live like a *normal* life, too. I have a regular job. I have friends who are not into punk rock. I have friends who *are* into punk rock. I see people from playing music. I go on tour and I meet friends, but I don't know. It's a hard question for me to answer.
Peter: I sometimes feel more different from the punk scene. Maybe that's because you're so used to it—so you notice that more—because you're around it.
Todd: I think you all have been *in* it for so long that you don't have to prove anything to yourself or to others, but I was hoping that you're approaching what you do a little different than a lot of people around you...
Will: That comes in with DIY, with doing stuff ourselves. Tommas releases our records, we record ourselves, stuff like that. A lot has to do with the DIY ethic of just being comfortable enough to do stuff for yourself and not have to rely on the music industry. For me, that's what a lot of punk is.
Todd: A lot of people's outside perception of punk is just visual representations—clothing and hair—or bad behavior, versus having sustainable models. I'm sitting in a room in Southern California with a guy from Northern California, two Danes, and a German. You all are in a band. I don't think most people would understand how that band would ever exist.
Tommas: I think we don't, either.
Will: True. [Everyone laughs.]
Todd: Are you primarily friends and this is more of a hobby? Or you can't stop playing music and this is the latest configuration of musicians that you want to be with?
Tommas: Peter and Fabian did the band first, actually—recording the two singles that I was releasing. Will was supposed to play the bass.
Peter: Will asked us if we wanted to come play a show in Hamburg at Get Lost Fest. He said he would play bass because we were only two people, guitar and drums. Since will wanted to play bass, so we asked Tommas to play second guitar but he didn't want to play guitar.
Tommas: I *can't* play the guitar.
Peter: So then we convinced Will to play guitar and Tommas could play bass.
Tommas: But we've know each other for a long time.
Peter: From touring and stuff.
Will: It helps a lot that we've been through the same kind of tours and on the same circuit of shows. We know a lot of the same people. I feel a lot more comfortable personally—going out on the



road with people who have been through it—than a bunch of young kids who go off on their own everywhere.

Todd: You've been around the block. You know what's going to happen. You know your financial situation, your expectation for how many people come to a show.

Will: We're the brokest band. [Everyone laughs.] Ever. Probably.

Todd: But a lot of you have been in bands that have been very popular. That have played in front of thousands of people. How do you position that in your brain? Do you miss those days or are you just happy to be playing music?

Tommas: It was a lot of fun playing those bands, but most shows were not *big* shows. Most shows were small shows. We didn't make any money out of it.

Peter: Yes and no. It was fun playing with Gorilla Angreb in front of a bunch of people who are really into it and know the songs. But I also think it's fun to do new bands.

Will: It's not the same kind of pressure.

Todd: Sometimes the audience gets fatigued with a band, and even people in the band.

Will: Two of us have record labels. I write for a magazine. Peter's in three bands. Fabian is also playing in three bands. We're definitely in it. It would be playing it down to say that we're not completely involved in punk. We are really. But we also have normal lives as well.

Todd: If somebody asked me what I did last week, it was very domestic. My "day job" is putting together a punk zine and organizing a hundred eighty people. But this week, my biggest project was making a large shelving unit that I put all my 7"s in. Out of being on this planet for forty-four years—this week, that's what I thought about the most. I'm not thinking—"Punk. Punk. Punk. Punk. Punk. Punk."—all the time.

Tommas: Yeah you don't think about it anymore.

Todd: Let's get a little bit of character for everybody. Before you discovered punk, what were you really interested in as a child?

Tommas: I was playing a lot of sports.

Todd: You were a ping-pong/table-tennis guy, right?

Tommas: Yeah. Table-tennis. Football. European football, what you would call "soccer."

Todd: F-U-T-B-O-L, fuht-bohl.

[Everyone laughs.]

Tommas: That's what I spent a lot of time on, and then I discovered music that we were able to play ourselves, in bands. And then the whole sports career got put aside.

Fabian: When I was eight years old, it all kind of started. I started playing music. Skateboarding came a little bit earlier.

Todd: Skateboarding and punk rock in a lot of places are conjoined. One in the same.

Peter: I did a lot of sports, too. Swimming a lot. Some skateboarding. I was really into comic books and drawing. I was really into outer space stuff. I was too lazy to try to become an astronaut; that would never happen.

Will: I'm pretty much the same. I was playing baseball, surfing because I grew up in Santa Cruz. I think punk came along because I really felt alienated by a lot of society. It was a way for me to voice that with some sort of productive means. Yelling at society, "I hate you!" [laughter]

Todd: Who in the band has served the most prison time?

Tommas: I spent six hours in jail, because Gorilla Angreb was playing a demonstration. We blocked the traffic in Copenhagen, because they were going to close down this house where we had a practice space. So they arrested us. We got a fine and I actually paid it, because you'd have to go to jail one day.
Peter: I didn't pay the fine. I figured it would be a good way to see what it is like, but it was an open prison.
Todd: What is that?
Peter: You can leave during the day. It's pretty much a place to sleep. They gave me a train ticket. It took about four hours to get there and four hours back. I probably spent about ten hours there in total. I came in and it was time for dinner. I sat around and talked to some people, took a nap, went to sleep. The next day I could go home.
Will: Some hard time. [laughter]
Todd: Did you ever spend time for spray painting trains? Did you ever get caught for that? [Everyone except Todd laughs.]
Peter: What do we do now? Continue the story? ...Or?
Tommas: That was Gorilla Angreb? No, no, no...
Peter: It was a joke.
Tommas: It was a joke.
Peter: With No Hope For The Kids, someone made an interview with us in Belgium. They asked if we played in any other bands and Kasper said, "Oh, Peter plays in Gorilla Angreb" and I said, "Yeah, they suck!" and the interviewer was like, "Yeah, I never really liked them that much." So I figured that he didn't know that I was in it, so I just started talking a lot of shit about Gorilla Angreb and how they're horrible people and Tommas smoked crack. I was like "Why don't you kick him out of scene? They're *crazy*!" And then Tommas heard and he started making up stories about me.
Tommas: I made up some good stories about this guy. So if you still have the old *Razorcake* (#33) that we did, there's probably a lot of bullshit.
Peter: I don't really spray paint or graffiti. I had a job painting it over. [Everyone laughs,] It was for a movie though and they were going to do spray paint on these trains. I don't really like graffiti.
Will: I do.
Todd: Tell me this part isn't true—that you were a naked break dancer?
Peter: No. [Everyone laughs.] Only at home. That was at the end of the old skateboard movie which starred the bass player of No Hope For The Kids.
Todd: And that's true?
Tommas: No, it's all bullshit.
Todd: So you all are just really boring, is that what you're saying?
Tommas: Well, I think this is pretty funny.
Peter: It haunts us ten years later.
Todd: In English, there's very little research on you all, so I'm trying to piece things together to make it a little more interesting.
Peter: We just ruined it.
Todd: You ruined it; now let's try to improve it. What shape of involvement has changed over time for you in punk rock? Tommas, you ran a record store, Repo Man Records.
Tommas: Nine years. And I carried mainly punk stuff.
Todd: People think, "I love records! I want to have a record shop."
Tommas: It was a dream, too. It was a hobby. I've always collected records and I had the idea to open a record shop. And I did it. I made it work, I lived off of it for two, three years—alone from this—working a little bit on the side. And the shit got harder. People download and streaming. You can still sell records but it's hard to make a living from it. I was maybe too involved. I had to take some time away from it all. I don't go to shows that often anymore because I'm just fed up. When we're all playing and I see bands, I can still see when there's something I like and feel it when it's good, but I had to kick back and relax a little bit. It's cool to play music. I can't live without making music of some kind. I like to release some records, but I scaled it down a lot.

I have kids too. So everything is a priority with your time. I was working a lot of hours with the shop, just to keep it afloat, and that time took away time from being with the kids. So I had to close it down. I have this other job. I'm super happy about this job. I have more time and I earn more money. So, everything's good.
Will: And punk carries on. Even without your record store.
Tommas: How is that possible? [laughter]
Todd: It's humbling, but it's also like, you have to define your own perception of yourself.
Tommas: Well I'm proud of what I did. I had the idea. I pulled it off. I had it for fucking nine years. Most record stores, they close down in two, three years. We made it work. I'm happy I did it. I have no regrets.
Will: And it was a real destination spot for people traveling to Copenhagen.
Todd: Jennifer Federico came to your store when she was travelling.
Tommas: That's true.
Todd: How about any of you all? How has your involvement changed over the years?
Peter: I like playing music. All kinds. I like rock and roll but I don't know if I have so much involvement with the punk scene, really. I mean, I do in the way we play music, and that's where you end up playing. But I don't feel like I really *do* anything within the punk scene.
Will: He just plays in a lot of bands that are pretty active in punk. [laughs]
Peter: I mean, if it were other people who listen to my music, then I wouldn't be in the "punk scene." It happens to be those people.
Will: That's true.
Todd: That's a good way to look at it.
Fabian: I think it got less for me. I used to play in more bands, and I'm really not *sad* that it's gotten a little less. I'm just happy to play with those guys now and then. That's all. It's cool for me.
Will: I think my involvement has gone up, actually. I came from just being a shitty kid on the streets hanging out and causing trouble, to starting bands, and then going more out of my way to go to shows and to put out records. I'm not there yet, but who knows.
Todd: Let's talk about Sun Bather in particular. Why the name Sun Bather?
Peter: We did a couple of songs just because we were bored and then we thought, "Oh all right, we'll make two songs and we'll give it to Tommas. He'll put it out." [laughter] We'll turn it into a band and we need to come up with a name. I think you had some old *Sun Bather* magazines or something?
Fabian: Men's magazines, books with old men's magazines, and there was one magazine called *Sun Bather* in it, which looked pretty cool. So we thought, "Yeah, let's just take that name."
Todd: Do you have a visual aesthetic? Are you intentionally doing a juxtaposition of a leisure activity and then there's a barking dog, or a leisure activity and then something war-like? Is that a fair assessment of the visuals for the band?
Peter: I'm not sure we even thought about that much.
Will: I think that any of the stuff that I've done for the band like posters have all just been jokes that we came up with along the way, making fun of our own name. These guys are the ones who did the record covers.
Todd: I was expecting you all to be a little more tan, a little more bronzed.
Peter: We're working on it.
Will: I get sunburned in like two seconds. Spray tan for me.
Peter: We take it serious but it's not serious at all at the same time.
Fabian: I like the name Sun Bather, and maybe we took it because everything is black these days—black and this very dark…
Todd: Like Burial or Born Dead? (Bands that Fabian and Will are in.)
Will: Yeah! [laughter]
Peter: No Hope For The Kids!
Fabian: And it's all very mean and negative. Sun Bather sounds very nice. A pleasant name.
Todd: Would you consider yourselves anti-capitalists?
Peter: No. Well, I don't know. It depends how far it goes.
Will: I would.
Peter: I think everyone says they're "anti-capitalist," but what do you mean by "capitalist"? You like to buy stuff, you collect records. You buy a lot of stuff. You sell on E-Bay?
Tommas: Have a car...
Peter: I mean, if *that's* capitalism.

Will: But you have to live within the parameters of this society that you're around.
Peter: But people like to buy a lot of stuff. They like things. They like to get money.
Will: Personally, my needs are really, really small. I basically just want equipment and records. That's it.
Todd: When you went to Disneyland, was that in your mind at all?
Peter: That we give money to them?
Todd: Not even that. Just, because you all went to Disneyland?
Will: Yeah.
Todd: And you enjoyed Disneyland?
All: Yeah.

record business, like record collection for example. People are like, "Test pressings. I'd like to have more color vinyl." And then they keep it and then they sell it really expensive later.
Will: That's exactly *not* how I am. I just want to own the music. I don't care about represses or whatever.
Peter: But those things are everywhere. And a lot of times people say McDonald's and Coca Cola, and then they'll go buy some beer and it was distributed by Coca Cola Or "I don't eat at McDonald's; I go to Burger King" and *then* it's fine. You know, you just have those two things, and most

are really rich people there, but there's nobody so poor that they have to live on the street, mostly.
Tommas: You can end up living on the street if you don't fit in with the system.
Will: But comparative to here—I've been around Copenhagen quite often—I don't see it much.
Peter: In Denmark, they also *use* that thing. We're one big group. And we all pay to this little box and we get services. So then people get annoyed with you if you do anything that's unhealthy, because then you're gonna cost *me* money. And then it becomes—what I think is this communist

"To me, being a nice person is more important than doing all the correct things politically."

Will: It's expensive.
Todd: Do you find it was a complete joyous occasion, except the lines...
Tommas: The lines were pretty crazy. I think it was it fun, because we all grew up—at least we did in Europe—watching Donald Duck and Mickey Mouse.
Peter: And they have really good rides. [laughter] But I think I understand what you mean. Behind most things there's someone collecting money and there's an ugly side to it.
Todd: Right.
Peter: But that's behind *most* things. I think a lot of times, when the whole

people don't seem to really know *that* much about it.
Will: We're not high and mighty about anything. When I say I'm anti-capitalist, I mean if I were the person to choose, this would not be the lifestyle that I would choose.
Todd: You live in a society; you have to deal with other people.
Will: But I think that their version of capitalism is completely different than the American version of capitalism. In Denmark, there's a safety net for people. They pay a lot of taxes so there are a lot of social services. And there

kind of feel to it—a really negative side of socialism: the mindset of people. You're not gonna *help* someone on the street, because we have people to do that.
Will: It's crazy because people here have the same mindset, but you pay like ten or twenty percent of the tax they pay. And it's like, "I don't pay my taxes so these guys can be on welfare." But that's like the smallest bit of the whole pie when it comes to the whole budget.
Todd: Fifty cents of every dollar goes to military spending. Fantastic. Trying to negotiate something, in the back of your mind—when you're talking about buying

something that's *distributed* by Coca Cola—these are really good conversations to have with yourself and also not bashing people over the head about it. We *all* have to make these decisions. I didn't make this microphone. I didn't make this computer. But they're tools that I use.

Will: I personally had it in my mind when we went to Disneyland—it did cross my mind, but I was like, "I'm gonna go there once and check it off the list." It's a place I wanted to enjoy with my bandmates. It's a place that gives people joy. Some people. Some people it gives great misery.

Peter: I don't really like politics that much. I think I'd rather think about, if I find a wallet on the street, I want to return it and not steal it. I know a lot of people who will say, "Whoa, I'm left wing" and then they'll steal a bike and say, "Well, it was unlocked!"

Todd: "I need it more than they do."

Peter: Or, go steal at a supermarket. Usually it's just because people want stuff for free, but they'll make a political excuse for it. And I know people who have worked in supermarkets and they say, "We sit there and we don't trust anybody anymore." To me, being a nice person is more important than doing all the correct things politically.

Will: I agree with that.

Todd: I think people will cloak themselves in all these "good" things—that are on a large level—but just mask their real behavior.

Peter: You can be the biggest asshole, but if you don't use any of the "forbidden words" you're okay.

Will: And a lot of people that say, "Don't use said words" treat other people with disrespect *all* the time. It's like okay you don't use the word for it, but...

Peter: People use it to get in a position of power.

Will: I think that a lot of us are old enough to see right through that.

Todd: My bullshit detector is pretty well-honed.

Peter: I think some of those people—because that's what a lot of punk has been about, *rising up* and all this stuff—but when you're middle class white, it's like you can't really complain and you're always fighting for other people's rights. ....Getting worked up over here. [Laughter] Defending Disneyland.

Will: Defenders of Disneyland!

Todd: Who decided to put a flute into your band?

Fabian: That was me, because I have a flute lying around, and we had a track left.

Peter: Yeah, we needed some more stuff, and we thought, "Flute. Great, let's do it."

Todd: Do you travel with the flute? Any plans on putting the flute in more songs?

Fabian: Actually, I do not. As a drummer, I can't use my hands. Well, I use my hands, but I don't have two more so I can't play the flute while I'm playing drums. Everyone else is using both of their as well. We need an actual flute player.

Todd: Maybe Eva (who is traveling with the band)?

Will: I was actually mentioning that to them.

Fabian: We'd have to buy a flute.

Todd: A tour flute.

Peter: I don't know what review it was that was: "This is pretty good. What the hell is up with that flute?"

Todd: I've never been a musician. When you're listening to old punk records, intently—some of you are collectors—do you listen to something and go, "I think I can explore something about this song or this album and bring it into what I'm doing now?"

Tommas: I've never thought about that. If you come up with riffs, it's just something that you didn't think too much about, some inspiration.

Todd: You've never looked back and went, "Oh, I know where I got that from?"

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SORESPOT is a CHICAGO 4-piece w/ mbr of CANADIAN RIFLE outputting a unique blend of noisy LO-FI ALT PUNK. Dual female / male vocals take a back seat to loud guitars and catchy melodies. At times more atmospheric, Sorespot's music is a welcomed addition to CHICAGO'S growing list of locals attempting to differentiate.

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"It's a different energy now."

Peter: I think so, sometimes. You come up with something and then later on you realize...
Tommas: Yeah but you didn't think of it when you did it.
Todd: I'm trying to see if it's almost subconsciously—you're surrounded by so much from the past. I love the Dils, I love Really Red. I love...
Will: That sort of thing actually keeps me away from writing a lot of stuff that I would, personally, just because I have such a large knowledge of bands that sometimes I'm writing a riff and I'm like, "It's too much like this."
Peter: If you're writing a riff—and it sounds really catchy and really good right away...
Will: It's been done before.
Peter: It's probably something.
Todd: But I think Tommas is right, you yourself as the filter. If you say, "It sounds a little bit too much like something else," then that's the filter that changes it.
Tommas: But when you play around, have a riff, then you take it to your practice space with your band, it ends up somewhere else.
Will: It *should,* at least.
Peter: It does.
Todd: Everything gets shredded and changed. In Sun Bather, I hear a lot of Dangerhouse Records. I've been in Los Angeles for twenty years. That's shaped my perception of a lot of early punk. That's my frame of reference.
Tommas: Personally, I'm into more American punk rock, British punk rock. I like that stuff, too. If I were going to choose, I'd choose old American obscure punk.
Todd: Like how obscure?
Tommas: Like very obscure.
Todd: You know, if you didn't lie to me so much, I actually have an extra Brat record I could have given you.
Will: Ooooooooh. I recant everything!
Todd: Tell me some truth!
Will: Peter's tag is ... I have a video of him break dancing naked!
Tommas: It's actually pretty great. That was a great story, I thought.
Todd: Very compelling.
Tommas: The naked break dancer.
Todd: All my notes might just be lies. So I'm just gonna go through things. Will, is it true that you lived in New Zealand for a year, as a child?
Will: I did. Truth.
Tommas: Where?
Will: In Auckland
Peter: In Auckland and then you went to Oakland?
Will: I did. For one year.
Todd: Now we're on to something, this is called a true story. Is it true that your mother was part of the Children of God cult?
Will: It sure is.
Tommas: What's the Children of God?
Will: It's a cult. A Christian cult, non-denominational. They're very underground.
Todd: Well I think this may inform you. I was reading a lot of Born Dead lyrics, and it seems to mirror some tenets of Children of God. They condemn the "the system," "which include governments and the rest of society. The society is regarded as evil, and society generally is seen as a near collapse."
Will: This is very true.
Todd: And second, which I think is very entertaining, is that "family members are urged to masturbate while fantasizing about engaging in sexual activity with Jesus."
Will: I never experienced that one. [Laughter.] False! The stories I've never told my band mates.
Todd: Was it freaky? Was it normal?
Will: It lasted about four years. My mother was in it before I was born, and then she went away and was doing stuff with her family—her real family, they call it also "the family"—and then they had what they called a "Searcher's Meeting," trying to get back the people who had gone out from the cult. So we came back to L.A. in '85, '86. We lived in a communal home in Eagle Rock, and then they moved us to Australia and New Zealand for a year each. We were "missionaries" supposedly, but I mean nothing weird happened to me, I swear. [laughter] It sounds really funny.
Peter: Now it makes sense!
Will: They had some weird stuff, like "sleepover night" where the kids would share a bed with each other, which is not weird I guess, if it's like…
Todd: If you're buddies with people. Just hanging.
Will: Yeah, I guess, but nothing like…
Todd: No bad touches, or anything like that?
Will: No, but I definitely heard of stuff like that happening. But my mom kept me really close to her all the time. I think she didn't really trust them, to tell you the truth. And then after we lived in New Zealand, we came back to L.A. to reconnect with them here, because our visas were up. They had gone full underground because the government was looking for them, and we couldn't find them. Then we moved to Santa Cruz. That was when we just were done with it.
Todd: Interesting. I grew up in a small desert town, and there was a cult whose "face" was Desi Arnaz Jr. from *I Love Lucy*, and his ballerina wife. When I was growing up, I loved it because they had the best yard sales. Later on in life, I realized when they joined the cult they gave up all their possessions.
Will: Yeah, they used to make me give my toys away—and stuff like that—to needy kids, which sorta was like an asshole thing to do to a little kid, because I wasn't from a rich family or anything. It was stuff that my grandma had sent me. It was what it was. Actually, it made me, at a very young age, have to think for myself. I was the one who was like, "I don't believe in this." A lot of Born Dead lyrics—and stuff that I've done in the past in band—has been very much from that mindset. The Society thing is sorta funny that you mentioned that. It does

come from that, in a weird way, but it's completely from a different angle.
Todd: Would you say that you are satisfied or unsatisfied with your vehicle rental experience in the United States? [laughter]
Peter: I sit up front most of the time. I'm one of the drivers. I'm pretty satisfied.
Tommas: It's very amateurish for people who have been touring for fifteen years to end up with a rental car that's too small.
Peter: We didn't have a choice. When we came to the rental place, they had one car.
Tommas: Yeah, we should have rented it a week before, a month before...
Peter: But you guys couldn't make up your minds when you were gonna leave Los Angeles.
Tommas: I'm not pointing fingers!
Peter: I am! I'm pointing fingers.
Tommas: We ended up getting this rooftop carrier, and we sit on the bass flat case in the back seat. It's not so long a drive. We've tried worse.
Will: It's bearable.
Peter: Old and gotten weak.
Tommas: We're a weak-ass band.
Todd: Musically, what do you do—I hate using the word "maturity"—but as you grow older and, really great hardcore requires a high amount of intensity and energy. How have you adapted over the years? I don't like the idea of people just mellowing out.
Will: I think that we still play like a hardcore band, almost. Except for maybe Peter, because he plays a lot of chords. But we play a lot of down strumming. Fabian's hitting the crap out of the drums.

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Tommas: We need to talk about this in a hardcore context, because this is so different from hardcore punk.
Will: It's more like Killed By Death punk. Or garage.
Tommas: But I think we play with energy. We don't play the same songs, maybe?
Todd: Have you approached it differently?
Fabian: I think you can't really change the way you play.
Tommas: Once you started playing as you do, and when you grew up with hardcore, you probably played hardcore style. You were born into this or you grew into this kind of playing.
Will: I think that also if you keep in practice, that's the thing. We've all just consistently been in bands. Well, you brought up the old U.K. bands that just dropped off the scene and then they came back like twenty years later having not played in twenty years. Of course they're not gonna be in shape for that, unless they're doing crazy workouts or something.
Tommas: I feel rusty.
Will: Yeah? I feel fine.
Peter: I just think you mellow out in a certain way. You get a different kind of energy. When you're younger—especially when you're into hardcore—there's no way you were gonna play a wimpy song. You wanted to prove yourself more. I feel more relaxed about those kinds of things now. Sometimes I do miss the energy I would have back then. Everything was exciting, new. It's a different energy now.
Todd: You approach it, from playing in a sonically intense way. You know when you start a fire, the flames are really high, but when it goes down, it actually gets hotter and those coals burn for a long time. That kind of thing, instead of just being soft and just shitty type of music.
Will: I think that a lot of bands don't know how to play with a lot of intensity and play something different than just really fast. We play with intensity. The way you play is really important. How you strum a guitar and how you hit the chords exactly at a certain time, or take your fingers off, it's really important. It's not just, "Oh yeah, I pick up a guitar and I strum it."
Todd: The Young Offenders were the same way.
Will: Yeah, I really love the Young Offenders.
Todd: You listen to the records—the records have a life of their own—and seeing them live, they just pounded. They were amazing.
Will: Those guys were great. They're from San Francisco.
Todd: Tim Brooks is one of my favorite guys, for sure.
Will: We used to hang out at the same bar all the time.
Todd: This may be true. I don't know. Will, fill in the gaping holes to this story, "The end diagnosis was that I had a torn muscle in my chest from getting punched in Tasmania and then my blood alcohol content was ten times the legal limit fifteen hours after I stopped drinking."
Will: Okay, Born Dead was on tour with a band from Australia called Piss Christ. We flew to Tasmania to play two shows at the same place. It was a hotel bar. The first night we played, they liked us a lot. They made the huge mistake of telling us—this was six months into tour, so we were real big time party living—we could have whatever we wanted at the bar. So meanwhile we're just walking around with pitchers of beer, not cups. And just pouring tequila in our mouths being total jerks. Played a good show in the daytime. After that, it got progressively worse, the party.

I was really drunk. I pissed in a hallway. A girl came by, saw me, was like, "What the fuck are you doing?" I was like, "Fuck off!" I was wasted. She went and got her boyfriend. He came in after I was in the room with a bunch of people and just punched me. Of course being as drunk as I was, I just fell over like a sack of potatoes, hitting a chair on my way down.

The next day, we flew back to Australia from Tasmania, after apologizing to the owner of the place a little bit. Before that, some kids had stolen a keg of beer from our gig in Australia and it took them two or three days to find a tap. So they called that day and were like, "Hey we have a keg over here. You have to come." And I was like, "No, man. I'm done." I already made an ass of myself once. Probably many times, on that tour. But ended up going over there anyways and by the end of the night people are diving on this couch on me. I'm doing keg stands and stuff.

I wake up the next morning and I started having a panic attack, which I didn't know even existed. Then I started sneezing blood. They called an ambulance. As soon as I got in the ambulance, they gave me a sedative and I was fine. But they wanted to run all the tests. Doctor came in, was just like, "Yeah, you can't breathe very well because you've torn a muscle in your chest. Have you been drinking a lot?" And I was like, "Yeah" And he's like, "Your blood alcohol level is ten times the legal limit." It was pretty bad.
Todd: Did you need to get surgery or is it a self-healer?
Will: No, no. It was just a self-healer. We went to New Zealand the next day and I just was out—spent the remaining five days of tour with no alcohol.
Todd: Did you ever pay the hospital bill?
Will: I did not. It was only sixty-five dollars. I was like, "Why should I pay it?" It was really cheap.
Todd: So Peter, I have to dispel another myth. My Danish isn't very good, but you said that, the Danish translation of "Spild Af Vinyl" means "large dildo manufacturing corporation."
Peter: One hundred percent true. When did I say that?
Todd: That was in an interview in *Mountza*, the Greek zine.
Will: This guy's good. This guy does his work.
Peter: It could also mean a waste of vinyl.
Todd: But it's good to know the dual nature of it.
Peter: That's the difficult thing about the Danish language.
Todd: I just want Fabian to end this interview. Can you finish this sentence with me? "Never give up..."
Fabian: Never give in.
Todd: There you go. I very much like Sun Bather but I wanted to speak to you, too, because all of the great music all you guys have respectively released over the years.
Will: For me, it's like playing with some of the guys that I just never thought I would play music with in a hundred years. I used to distro their records and just be like, "These guys are amazing." For me it's like, "Thank you guys!"

Aaron "Rev" Peters–Guitar, Vocals
Austin Jones–Bass
Sean Lovett–Keys
David Casey (not present)–Drums

SUCCESS

Interview by Kayla Greet
Photos by Julie A Ferguson, Patrick Houdek and Paul Silver
Additional questions by Todd Taylor
Layout by Becky Bennett

Photo: Patrick Houdek

For the last decade, the members of Success have kept steadfast smiles on their faces. There's a unique quality about these people—they have the ability to stay positive all the time and that translates directly into their music. I've often reflected on my twenties, now nearly two years gone, and measured my goals against my accomplishments. What I boil it down to—more often than I'd like—is that I spent the first half thinking I'd live forever and the second half knowing I won't. Success bridges that gap in the tightest of balancing acts. While they're not quite the Peter Pans of pop punk, they're still grappling adulthood with a light heart and a spring in their steps.

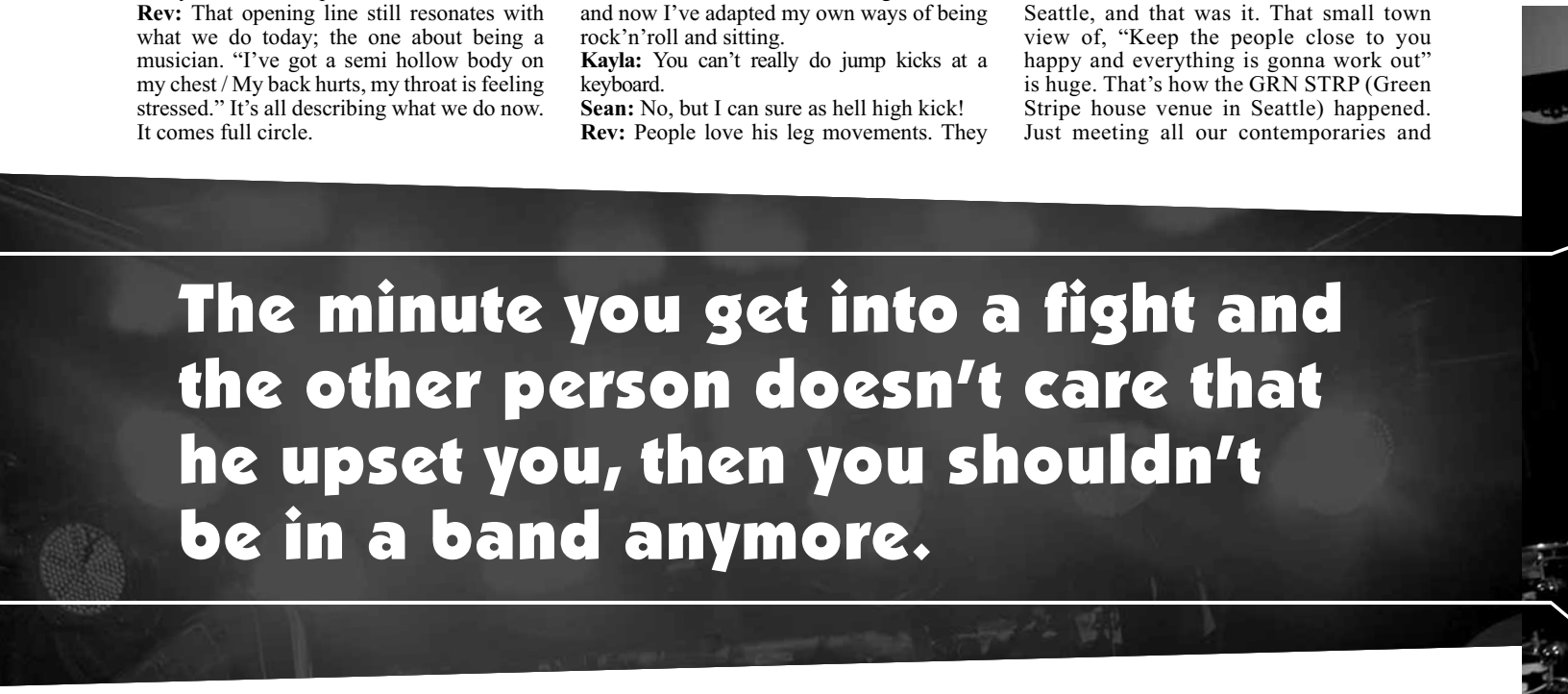
They offer blue collar workers rose colored glasses, and do so with exuberance. The Seattle Sounders soccer team started playing two of their songs during games because they were drawn to the motivation of the underdog that Success has in their lyrics. Now they're blasted over the stadium speakers with the likes of Cock Sparrer. On a sunny Northwest day, I sat down with Success in the alley behind their practice spot and talked about their roots in Enumclaw, Wash., building a band into a family, and what keeps them going. They are the history of a boring town and they want to share that with you.

Kayla: I got lost in this rabbit hole of late '90s/early 2000s Tacoma, Wash. punk bands because I was thinking about the first time I saw Rev—when he was in a ska band called Rocket In My Pocket.
Rev: Oh god. Wow. That's right. That's how we knew each other. What's crazy is that I left that band in 2002. So that means you and I met a bazillion years ago.
Kayla: What's funny is that I didn't realize it until Lukas Myhan did the SPAZ (Seattle Punk Audio Zine) podcast with you guys. You saw me at a Seattle show and said, "I know you from somewhere." I said, "I don't think you do," because I had just been living in L.A. for two years. That was in 2009 or so. I listened to that podcast and it clicked that you were in that band. I have a Pistol For A Paycheck (band that Rev was in after Rocket In My Pocket) CD, too.
Rev: Nice. Now throw it away.
Kayla: Destroy all evidence.
Rev: Make it into a coaster.
Kayla: Most of you grew up in Enumclaw, Wash., besides Sean. You're from Michigan?
Sean: Otsego, Mich., actually. Just outside of Kalamazoo.
Rev: Me, Dave, and Austin are all from the 'Claw.
Kayla: That's what you guys call it?
Austin: Or the Scratch.
Rev: We're actually headlining the Enumclaw Arts and Music festival.
Kayla: No way! Are you serious?
Rev: Yeah, it's gonna be so awesome. They're putting a stage in between the local pub and the QFC (grocery store). [All laugh.]
Austin: Which we used to call Skate Corner—'cause that's where we hung out to skate and it was a corner.
Rev: Enumclaw has been coming up as of late. I don't know if you saw my post, but we got a Slurpee machine at the local movie theater.
Kayla: Oh, hell yeah! How many flavors?
Rev: Two. None of that "one" bullshit. You can mix 'em.
Kayla: How old were you when you left Enumclaw?
Rev: I was out days after high school. I went to Seattle. Austin was here a year before me.
Austin: I came here for school. I went to the Art Institute (of Seattle).
Rev: David and I wanted to do a punk band. We started writing some stuff and he suggested Austin, who we all knew from high school.
Kayla: Because he was in that prog band before that. [All laugh.]
Austin: I gotta cop to it, so that I own my goatee and earrings. [laughs]
Rev: So Dave was like, "What about Austin?" Because Austin— and still to this day—is the most talented bass player I know. Real story.
Kayla: He won't let you say it, though.
Rev: Yeah, no—he really is incredible. My response to David was, "He's good, but doesn't he play only metal?" He was like, "No, he's just in a band right now, but we could talk to him." So then our first practice was in David's bedroom in our house in Georgetown (south Seattle neighborhood). It just made sense. We just giggled the whole time and were stupid.
Kayla: Sean, you were in Koozebane before this.
Sean: Yup, I was in Koozebane for six years. Before that I was in a band called The Fucking Assholes.
Kayla: We won't say the name of Austin's prog metal band, but we will call out TFA.
Rev: Shhh! Dude, you guys slayed, though. That guitar player noodled like a motherfucker. Ponytail and all.
Kayla: Gotta rock the ponytail until you can't.
Rev: Yeah, exactly!
Kayla: You guys signed to Red Scare last year and that sort of came about because you and Toby Jeg (owner of Red Scare) are both from Enumclaw.
Rev: His brother was my soccer coach in high school. That's how small our town is. So I knew Toby, but I also knew the Enumclaw "Legend of Toby." This guy who went to San Francisco, interned at Fat Wreck Chords, and started his own record label. For almost every record we put out, I hit him up. "Hey! Listen to this. I'm great *and* I'm from Enumclaw. Listen to my goddamned band."
Kayla: And you know how hard it is for good things to come out of that town.
Rev: He did respond to everything I sent him. Every single time. Other labels that hit us up nowadays to work with us didn't respond back in the day. And that could have been the Enumclaw connection, but he was always cool, gave me advice, and was real legit on stuff. Then we played with The Lawrence Arms and Brendan (Kelly) was like, "Why have you not put this record out?" After I got off stage, Toby said he wanted to put the record out. I'm not saying that he swayed him in any way, but Brendan has always been a big supporter of us.
Kayla: You said on Lukas's podcast that the name Success came from a tour where David ate twenty-three burritos and was constipated for three days.
Rev: The one thing we didn't add was that last day was him pounding prune juice and Ex-Lax, just trying to make it happen.
Kayla: Just wanting to poop so bad.
Austin: He was green. He was getting sick.
Rev: We talked about taking him to the hospital because he was backed up. And then the noises... I've never heard such sounds from the bathroom. [laughs] It was like splashing, straining, and crackling all at the same time.
Kayla: So was that the end of the burrito-eating challenge?
Rev: Fuck yeah. That never happened again.
Kayla: It's a contest that you don't want to win, actually.
Austin: One or two, maybe, if you're feeling saucy.
Kayla: I think they're called enchiladas when you get saucy.
Rev: Hey-yo! Speaking of that, yesterday I got two gift cards from Sean and Aaron. One was to Chipotle and one was to Taco Bell. The Chipotle one is for twenty-five bucks, but they gave me fifty dollars in Taco Bell money! [All laugh.]
Austin: You're eating Taco Bell for the whole tour, basically.
Rev: Yeah, I'm gonna start selling Taco Bell bucks to you guys.
Austin: You're gonna be my fire sauce daddy.
Kayla: Are you guys still playing covers? You used to do Spin Doctors, Harvey Danger.
Sean: We're doing "Knowledge" by Operation Ivy and we're also doing a Tom Petty song. We're doing "American Girl." Pretty bitchin'.
Kayla: You always tend to pull out the weird, old school cuts that no one would expect.
Rev: It's what we love. That's why. People always get disappointed when we have interviews and they ask what our influences are, and we're like…
Kayla: Journey.
Rev: Fuck yeah!
Sean: Boston.
Rev: You know, Green Day was great, and we still love Rancid, but, realistically, I listen to all the Steve Miller Band records front to back.
Kayla: What bands are you most compared to, and do you feel they're accurate?
Rev: It's changed over the years. Most people's perception of what punk is, is drastically different from one another's. We usually referred to it as punk rock and roll. We get a lot of comparisons to bands like Green Day, or Blink 182, from people who are not familiar with much punk. But people who are in the know give us different comparisons. One Man Army, Latterman, Bouncing Souls. We normally just tell people that it's like if Tom Petty started a punk band. [laughs]
Kayla: If classic rock is your aspiration model, why not play that style? What's the filter between that and punk for you, or do you want to be the "punk Journey?"
Austin: We all come from different backgrounds in music, but have the commonality of pop/DIY punk, so that classic rock/punk/whatever that comes out when we write somehow becomes our own brand of "punk." Without a doubt we lean a little on the classic rock side, but it's to be expected when you grew up with your parents listening to Cheap Trick.
Sean: Who did that one song, "Go for a Soda?"
Rev: Kim Mitchell from Canada. Kayla, I just made your life better. Look up the song "Go for a Soda." I have this obsession lately with '70s and early '80s Canadian rock and roll, and this guy wrote a song about how relationships are tough, so instead of going on dates, why not just go get sodas with your buddies? It's quite possibly one of the greatest songs ever written.
Kayla: That's amazing.
Sean: Nobody gets hurt!
Austin: The music video is incredible.
Rev: Nobody cries! Yeah, we're all classic rock kids.
Kayla: I remember a show at the Belly House (in Seattle) where you played Billy Bragg's "Waiting for the Great Leap Forward," and no one knew it.

Rev: We found that record at the exact right time too. 'Cause once this band started, I found Billy Bragg and I pushed him on the other guys. The minute we all listened to it, we were like, "This guy's got it." At that same time, that first Dead To Me record and that None More Black record came out. That's all we listened to that summer.

Austin: That None More Black is so good. It reminds me of some of our first tours, cruising through San Francisco with *This Is Satire* blasting in the van. It was a highlight of my life. It was euphoric.

Rev: That opening line still resonates with what we do today; the one about being a musician. "I've got a semi hollow body on my chest / My back hurts, my throat is feeling stressed." It's all describing what we do now. It comes full circle.



The minute you get into a fight and the other person doesn't care that he upset you, then you shouldn't be in a band anymore.

Kayla: Sean, you learned how to play keyboard *for* this band?

Sean: Yes. One day Rev was like, "I kinda want to put keys in the band. Do you wanna learn them?" So I said, "Sure," and bought a keyboard. I did some research, bought the keyboard, and then spent about three hours every day for three months straight learning how to play keys for the record.

Rev: We were working together at the time and there were days when Sean was like, "Fuck, I can't do it. I'm having such trouble with it." And I just was like, "Well, you've *got* to." He was coming out of a situation, a point in his life where—if you don't mind me stepping in?

Sean: Oh yeah, go for it.

Rev: He needed a transition in his life and needed something to grab him. We had long conversations about this while working together in a warehouse for a band. Every day we had these talks. The exchange with him playing keyboard was really that simple, but it mostly was about how we needed to play music together.

Sean: I originally went out and was selling merch, playing guitar for a couple songs, and we decided to do the keys thing. It was really fucking hard to learn that in three months. I've been a guitar player forever.

Kayla: And it doesn't really translate well?

Sean: It does music theory-wise, which took me a while to realize. But I'm right-handed, so my rhythm has always been my right hand on guitar, but it's actually my noodley hand on keys. It's a little backwards.

Rev: It's a technical term. Noodley.

[All laugh.]

Kayla: Is it a weird adjustment to sit down for shows?

Sean: That took some time to get used to and now I've adapted my own ways of being rock'n'roll and sitting.

Kayla: You can't really do jump kicks at a keyboard.

Sean: No, but I can sure as hell high kick!

Rev: People love his leg movements. They talk about it all the time.

Sean: Steve Youth from 7 Seconds used to get a huge kick out of that.

Rev: Pun intended. When you take somebody on the road—me and Austin have been doing this together for ten years now, and we've been through some members here and there—but you really see someone's true character when you're trapped in a fuckin' steel tube with them for weeks on end. And I think that was a big—having Sean on the road with us already and knowing his character. It's like being in a relationship. You have to be able to tolerate the other person's social graces and you have to all have the same general idea.

Kayla: I think of you guys as like the Avengers. You just choose people with the superpowers that you need. [All laugh.] You're like, "Fuck it. You can learn how to play later."

Austin: There's so much truth to that. Sean's super fuckin' talented, but if he wasn't such a rad dude, it just wouldn't work. That's more important than anything really.

Rev: One hundred percent.

Sean: Most of being on tour is just hanging out with dudes. We don't ever really fight. Sometimes we get a little snappy with each other, but we always make up.

Rev: It ends in crying and hugging every time. No bullshit. And that's what you have to do to be in a band. 'Cause the minute you get into a fight and the other person doesn't care that he upset you, then you shouldn't be in a band anymore. It's just gonna slowly cave. I can't say that we found the magic combination. We never had huge views of, like, "We're gonna change the world with this!" 'Cause we never were able to see that from Enumclaw. We can see the mountain and we can see Seattle, and that was it. That small town view of, "Keep the people close to you happy and everything is gonna work out" is huge. That's how the GRN STRP (Green Stripe house venue in Seattle) happened. Just meeting all our contemporaries and having good times with them. Making each other happy and that was enough.

Sean: I think that's a big part of why the Seattle music scene has become so awesome. It's such a tight knit group of friends. Especially with places like GRN STRP and The Kraken. It's family.

Kayla: I've seen shows where you've stopped mid-song to stop a fight or tell some of the dudes in the pit to cool it before they hurt someone. Do you ever get flack for being too posi and not enough punk?

Rev: All the time. It's ridiculous. People defending their right to be negative and shitty to others is the most juvenile thing in the world. No one ever says "I wish I had spent more time being an asshole" when they are on their death bed. Any effort made to better the lives of those around you is worth doing. People think it's all show or something, which is crazy. Then they get to know us and are blown away at how nice we are. You'd be surprised at how many musicians are big d-bags all the time. It's a waste of time and effort.

Austin: The idea of violence at punk shows has always baffled me. That's not my version

of punk! I think there's a big difference between rowdy fun in a pit and some knucklehead trying to ruin someone's good time or getting dominant. There's just no room for that at our shows and we will put an end to that as quickly as possible. If you're at one of our shows, you without a doubt have the opportunity to make some friends and have a good time, so take it!
Rev: Everyone has their tiffs.
Sean: But everyone is so supportive.
Kayla: Going back to the keyboard stuff—was it difficult to redo old songs to fit keys in?

Photo: Paul Silver

Sean: I feel like it made perfect sense. When we wrote *Radio Recovery,* we put it in as almost a second rhythm guitar, as a bed. We wrote some parts that had a little more complexity.
Austin: Choruses came out. And since you had a chance to develop a little more, it just became a staple.
Rev: Because of all the touring we put in last year, you could see Sean's character as a keys player start to blossom. And then it became—instead of an additional part—it became an essential part to our sound. And Sean being there, people love that. He gets up in their face and really gets people going. But the sound of the keys and what he was doing became a huge part and set us aside from a lot of other bands. When we toured with 7 Seconds, they were like, "What the fuck are these hipsters with combovers, beards, and this keyboard doing?"
Sean: I got so many dirty looks while setting up my keyboard.
Rev: And then we blew their fucking faces off! [All laugh.]
Kayla: That must have been a weird tour. Obviously, the ethics of both bands are there—like the positivity, the youth crew attitude of "Fuck everything. We're gonna have a good time."
Rev: I will say that the first part, with The Briggs, was great. And the second part wasn't not great, but it was with Bishops Green, which is a Canadian skin band. Kinda oi-ish. So the crowd changed between those two tours.
Sean: Those guys are great.
Rev: They're amazing people. But it changed the crowd dynamic, so the second half on the East Coast with them was more of people like...
Kayla: Crossing their arms.
Rev: Oh yeah! Sorry, you couldn't see that. I crossed my arms and looked angry.
Austin: Super tough.
Sean: Quintessential hardcore kid.
Rev: So you know how we got through that? We just shit talked them and called them out. "What's up, tough guy?" from the stage. "We're gonna party and smile and there's nothing you can do about it."
Austin: We played a cover of...
Rev: "Alternative Ulster."
Austin: Yeah, we played a rad cover that they couldn't ignore. They know the song. They're not cool if they don't know the song, right?
Sean: They were even doing this [crosses arms] and they were singing along. [laughs]
Rev: It wasn't everybody, but we definitely got to some of them.
Kayla: How do your lives outside of the band compare to when you're on tour? In what ways are they remarkably different?

I have an extensive collection of name tags and hairnets.

Sean: I drive for Uber when I'm not on tour, so ninety percent of my life is spent in my car or our van. When I'm home, I love everyday with my girlfriend and our dogs. But I miss the road and playing on stage every night.
Austin: Outside of the band I have a few other major hobbies that I try my hardest to keep up with. I like building things and wrenching on various machines and electronics. I'd say that being away from your partner and/or pup is the single toughest part of tour life. The only way to make it work is to have a healthy balance and be totally present in whatever you're spending your time on so the work stuff is equal to the fun stuff.
Kayla: What jobs do you have that allow you to tour so frequently? Have your job skills come in handy with the band, or vise-versa, what have you learned in the band that you use for your job?
Rev: Some of us have jobs, some have careers. You just learn to find a job where you can do this also. They aren't always chill with it. I have an extensive collection of name tags and hairnets. You just have to stay focused and be up front with your employers.
Austin: Ahh, the age old dilemma! I'm a licensed electrician and have been lucky enough to work for a couple shops that allowed unpaid time off when I need it. Again though, the balance comes into play because when I need extensive time off, I have to work twice as hard to pay bills while I'm out of town. As far as the job/band crossover goes, I will be forever in amazement how music is the great translator. I have yet to meet a complete stranger that I couldn't relate to on some level when we start to talk about music. For that reason, it doesn't matter if I'm wiring a menu board for a sports bar owner or installing a sound system in a billionaire's office. We can always start a conversation based on music or traveling.
Sean: We all have different backgrounds in audio production so that has come in handy a few times.
Kayla: What are some of the stranger places you've played?
Rev: I will say that this tour that we're doing with Millencolin—we've never gone directly through the South.
Kayla: Like the Bible Belt?
Rev: Yeah. There's some undiscovered country there for Success. Towns we've never played and I'm really hyped about that. Not to sound unappreciative, but we've done the same West Coast run tons of times. There's a little bit of adventure lacking. You get used to everything—where you're gonna sleep and who you're gonna hang out with. Not to say that's not cool, but I miss the feeling of, "Oh fuck, I don't know where I am right now."
Austin: …That church we played in Kentucky was incredible. Not something we'd ever done before. It was a huge venue with stained glass windows and a huge PA system. Just such a good show.
Rev: It was a monstrous church with this huge backdrop and a hundred-year-old pipe organ. The guy who ran the place opened it up and let everyone look inside.
Kayla: That would have been awesome if you played it for your set.
Sean: That's the first thing we asked!
Rev: I can't say that show was great, but it was beautiful to play in that spot. I got in my Batman underwear and went up into the rafters.
Kayla: So you had Batman in the Belfry?
Rev: [laughs] Totally.
Austin: I dropped my pocketknife in that hundred-year-old organ. So it's there. Somewhere.
Kayla: I think that's a criminal offense, if you stab an organ.
Rev: I'd love to play there again. I like the weird shows. On the Swingin' Utters tour we played that random spot next to the beach place. It was this weird, shitty sports bar outside of L.A.
Sean: That was an interesting show. The promoter/sound guy didn't show up until right when the show was about to start, so we were all just hanging out.
Rev: The show was misspelled and poorly written in chalk on the door.
Kayla: Oh no.
Sean: We weren't even sure if there was going to be a show.
Rev: But I love that shit. That's the punk rock part of us that I still latch onto. We get these shows where we get catering and get paid really well and everything's beautiful. The Observatory in Santa Anna took the best care of us. It was unbelievable. I remember specifically the lady was like, "You guys are thanking me more than anybody else ever does."
Kayla: 'Cause you're not used to that treatment and you're appreciative of it.

Photo: Julie A Ferguson

Rev: We're like, "That sucks. Come hang out with us and drink some beer." But the punk rock part of us hangs on to the little things that make it fun. Even on a run, I want one or two shows that are kinda sketchy. I wanna play in somebody's basement where somebody's boyfriend slept with somebody's girlfriend the night before and everyone's mad at each other.

Austin: Everybody's pissed and awkward.

Kayla: But then they can forget about it for half an hour.

Rev: Yeah 'cause then you play that huge show and it's like, "Man, last night was *awesome*!"

Kayla: How do you guys manage to stay so happy and positive, especially growing up in the dreary Northwest.

Austin: Here's the thing, we're only in public in the summer time. [laughs] 'Cause we're assholes in the winter.

Kayla: So you just hibernate? That's when you get all your songwriting done?

Rev: We all have that small town view on the world, but we also all have really great parents. Collectively, we all have awesome parents who still watch out for us, even at this age. And I don't mean us as individuals; they watch out for the whole band and care about our wellbeing. We were taught really solid lessons by them and I think it just carried over. That's really cheesy in retrospect, but it's true.

Sean: Totally. They're all really supportive. Every single one of them.

Kayla: So if you're having a rough time, you can just call up Austin's mom and say, "Hey."?

Rev: Yeah. We had dinner with his mom just the other night.

Austin: She's a standup lady.

Rev: His mom and dad come out to our shows all the time. My parents, every now and then, but they're really active in my life. I think it's keeping that family vibe in the band that brings it all together. We never have "What the fuck" conversations. We watch bands do that all the time on the road. If something happens, it's huge. If something happens with us, it's like "Are you okay?" and "How are we going to figure this out?" I think that's what a good family does. It helps that we've been friends for so long too. We met when we were fifteen and sixteen. Dave

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Photo: Paul Silver

"Yeah! Fuck you, life. I rule!"

has a beautiful daughter and can't tour all the time, but never fucking once have we been like, "This isn't going to work."

Kayla: Just look out for each other.

Rev: Yeah, man. The important part is having fun. We always have said that if we stop having fun then we'll quit. It's stupid. It's a tough business to be happy about. People shit on you all the time. People try to one up you. Status comes into play and people are okay with fucking each other over. There's no money in music anymore, so everyone's fighting for table scraps. They will pull it right out of your mouth if they can. One way to stay on top of that is to love the guys you're directly working with.

Kayla: Be excited about going to band practice and seeing each other.

Rev: Oh, I look forward to it every day of the week. Still. We're ten years deep and I have to go to practice or I'll freak out.

Kayla: Are you guys working on a new record?

Rev: It's been in the works for a little while. There's nothing set in stone about when, but we're talking about who we're going to do it with, recording wise. We're taking it slow this next year. Europe and a new record are our main goals.

Kayla: You kinda missed out on the European tour this year. You were supposed to play Groezrock, but the stars just didn't quite align.

Rev: Yeah, for sure.

Kayla: That's cool. You'll always have Paris. [All laugh.]

Rev: We went to Montreal. That's like basically France, right?

Kayla: Pretty much. [laughs] Don't tell them that, though.

Sean: Ugh, we just pissed off so many Canadians.

Rev: I love the Sainte Catherines. Let me just throw that out there.

Kayla: When it comes to "idols" and bands you've grown up with, what's it like being on the other side of the stage with them?

Austin: That is the craziest thing.

Sean: It's pretty nuts.

Rev: It's humbling. If anyone, no matter their status, cares about what four assholes from a small town do with their band, it's the coolest thing ever. But when you're playing Punk Rock Bowling to this huge crowd and you're killing it and you look over at Dicky Barrett singing along, that's when you're like, *"Yeah!* Fuck you, life. I rule!" That was a huge one. But you know what's fucking cooler? When some kid talks to you—because we play positive music—about some shitty situation they were going through and it helped them. That's the fucking shit right there. When we're mad about anything having to do with the business part, that's the thing to remind yourself of. Like, "Oh that's right. That's not why we do this." For right now, we just want to get stoked and keep playing.

TOP FIVES
RAZORCAKE

Art Ettinger
• Night Birds, *Who Killed Mike Hunchback?* 7”
• The Uncouth, *Jonesy’s War* LP
• Green Day, *Revolution Radio* LP
• Direct Action!, *Third Rail* LP
• *My Damage: The Story of a Punk Rock Survivor* by Keith Morris with Jim Ruland (book)

Bill Pinkel
• Joyce Manor, *Cody*
• Beach Slang, *A Loud Bash of Teenage Feelings*
• Ovens (a little late on this one, but great stuff)
• Against Me!, *Shape Shift with Me*
• Descendents, live at the Hollywood Palladium!

Billy Kostka
• S.B.F., Self-titled
• Violence Creeps, *Soul Narc*
• Vanilla Poppers, *Lurking in the Corner of Cleveland, Ohio*
• Watery Love, *Live Love*
• Warm Bodies, *Domo*

Camylle Reynolds
Top 5s of the Midnite Snaxxx Mini Tour
• Midnite Snaxxx playing Gonerfest 13 in Memphis!
• Crowd surfing to Giorgio Murderer at the Gonerfest afterparty
• DJing all ladies-fronted punk at Duke’s with Dulcinea in Nashville
• Bolton’s spicy fried psychedelic chicken experience (meat cheat in full effect)
• Chicago’s show with MAMA at the Emporium full of rockers and degenerates.

Candace Hansen
Top Five Fall Faves 2016
• Erica Freas, *Patient Ones*
• G.L.O.S.S. making straight dudes have too many feels and questions
• Transgress Fest, Santa Ana line up
• Whacking the shit out of Donald Trump piñatas
• Plaid shirts and coffee

Chris Mason
• C.C.T.V., Self-titled 7”
• Pure Disgust, Self-titled 12”
• Laika’s Orbit, *No Matter What It Takes* LP
• Color TV, Self-titled 7”
• Earth Girls, *Wanderlust* LP

Chris Terry
1. Scuzz, *Songs of the Sordid* LP
2. James Kochalka Superstar, *Beautiful Man* CS
3. Lutheran Heat, *Louder from the Other Side* LP
4. Paul Beatty, *The Sellout* (novel)
5. I’d like to say that this Prince kick started when he died in April, but let’s be real: it started when I first heard him in 1984. RIP.

Clara Luci Acosta
1. #Cakeceanera
2. Against Me!, *Shape Shift with Me* LP
3. *Turned Out a Punk* podcast with Damian Abraham
4. *Under the Big Black Sun: A Personal History of L.A. Punk* by John Doe and Tom DeSavia (book)
5. Fea, Self-titled

Craven Rock
Peru Top 5
1. Tie: Romance with my subletter before I left with promise of visiting zir in Spain and redemption at Ayahuasca Retreat, Canto Luz in the Amazon (Life gets rad!)
2. Being deep in the Amazon jungle (butterflies, anteaters, monkeys, toucans, snakes, much more)
3. Paracas: Paracas National Preservation (mountain range pushed up from the sea when plates shifted) and Islas Balletestas (island of penguins and sea lions)
4. Cusco (city)
5. Huacachina Oasis (dune buggying, sand boarding, and climbing a giant sand dune)

Designated Dale
1. Razorcake’s Quinceañera blowout party on 10/01/16, celebrating fifteen years of doing our part.
2. La Tuya (with La Victoria) and Desidia bringing the rock to said blowout party.
3. Getting to see so many friends far and wide that I haven’t seen in quite some time, and making new ones at, yes, said blowout party.
4. Celebrating seven years married to the raddest woman I know on 10/10/16.
5. Hopefully optimistic that the world is still in one piece by the time everyone reads this after the Presidential elections.

Daryl Gussin
• The Pretty Flowers, “Inconsiderate Dreams”
• La Tuya with La Victoria, live
• Rikk Agnew Band, *LEARN.*, tie with Low Culture, *Places to Hide*
• Awesome Fest X
• L.A.’s Murs establishing the Guinness record for rapping over twenty-four hours straight.

Cynthia Pinedo
Top 5 Bands I’ve Had on Repeat All Year
1. Accidente: Catchy Madrid punk with Lagwagon vibes. *Pulso* is A+.
2. Drawing Water / Watercolor Paintings: Oakland, lo-fi croon punk goodness. Two different versions of the same band. Listen, listen, listen.
3. Mean Jeans: “Throwing Stones” off of *Are You Serious?* is too good.
4. Jabber: Bay Area garage-y, bubblegum punk pop. “Nineteen” and “Grool” over and over.
5. The Get Up Kids: Because I’ll always be an emo kid at heart, and old enough to know better, young enough to pretend.

Griffin Wynne
Top 5 Songs to Be Done with Your Ex’s Bullshit to
1. Dyke Drama “Crying in a Bathroom Stall”
2. Ah Fuck “Everything”
3. Diet Cig “Cardboard”
4. Adult Mom “Sorry I Was Sorry”
5. Sports “Get Bummed Out”

Jeff Proctor
Top 5 Shows of Late
1. DRI with Christ Killer, Mexico City Rollers. October 23 at Soda Bar, San Diego.
2. Lenguas Largas, The Resonars, Octagrape, Red Pony Clock. October 14 at Kensington Club, San Diego.
3. Shellac. August 25 at the Regent, Los Angeles.
4. Guided By Voices with DTCV. August 20 at Teragram Ballroom, Los Angeles.
5. Shannon And The Clams with Peach Kelli Pop. July 15 at Teragram Ballroom, Los Angeles.

Jennifer Federico
Top 5 Cartoons for People Who Love Music (Part II)
• *Bob’s Burgers*, “It Snakes a Village”
• *Sanjay and Craig*, “Tufflips’ Tales of Terror”
• *Steven’s Universe*, “Steven and the Stevens”
• *Bob’s Burgers*, “The Hormone-iums”
• *Sanjay and Craig*, “Partybot”

Jimmy Alvarado
• Razorcake’s Quinceañera clambake, lots of local and out-of-town fam making the scene; DJ Susan, Desidia, La Victoria and La Tuya layin’ waste to everyone’s earholes; piñata violence; traditional court pogo-dance, and general shenaningans!
• Deadbeats, *666-1313* 2 x LP

Piñata Violence

• Bad Sports,
Living with Secrets LP
• Susan, *Never Enough* LP

Jim Woster

The 5 Most Punk Dylan Songs
• "Everything Is Broken"
• "Hurricane"
• "Idiot Wind"
• "Masters of War"
• "Positively 4th Street"

Kayla Greet

Top 5 Razorcake Quinceañera Moments
1. Todd's belle of the ball getup. Would have made Ru Paul proud.
2. RC logo piñata. I might not have busted it open, but I did punch it!
3. La Tuya con tres mujeres. Punk and mariachi played simultaneously.
4. RC pop up tattoo studio in the office. One of the best tattoo experiences I've ever had.
5. Putting beautiful faces to all those names. La familia por vida, los amos a todos.

Kevin Dunn

1. Razorcake's Quinceañera
2. Low Culture, *Places to Hide*
3. So Cow,
Lisa Marie Airplane Tour
4. Meat Market, *Dig Deep*
5. Brat Kings, *Hypnopedia*

Kurt Morris

Top 5 Things at Razorcake's Quinceañera
1. Meeting so many people I've known for so long but never met in person
2. La Tuya and La Victoria combining to form an amazing sound
3. The piñatas (and their subsequent beatings)
4. Seeing Alice Bag who looks like she hasn't aged since the 1970s
5. Todd Taylor in a wig, dress, and makeup. He looked gorgeous!

Megan Razzetti

• Erica Freas, *Patient Ones*
• Deep Sleep at Awesome Fest X
• The Black Dots at VLHS
• Macho Boys at Awesome Fest X
• The beautiful and creative people that have helped make Razorcake what it is and seeing some of them at the Razorcake Quinceañera.

Michael T. Fournier

• *Fluke Fanzine* #13
• *Cometbus* #57
• Spirit Plots, Self-titled LP
• Bad Leg, *Walk It Off* LP
• Razorcake Quinceañera (long) weekend

Mike Faloon

1. Mikey Erg, *Tentative Decisions* LP
2. The Figgs, *On the Slide* LP
3. The Mekons,
Existentialism, Book & CD
4. The Mummies?, *"Just One More Dance" b/w "I Don't Like It"* 7"
5. Tie: Spokenest, *Gone, Gone, Gone* LP, Toys That Kill, *Sentimental Ward* LP

Mike Frame

1. Fred And Toody, live in Denver
2. Pat Todd, *Blood and Treasure* CD
3. Descendents, album and EP
4. Nervosa, *Agony* CD
5. Sex Stains, Self-titled CD

DJ Naked Rob
Radio Valencia 87.9FM | SF

1. Halshug, *Sort Sind* LP
2. Low Culture, *Places to Hide* LP
3. Duchess Says,
Sciences Nouvelles LP
4. Violent Minds, *Eyes of Death* LP
5. Dethbeds, *Dungeon Scum* LP

Paul Comeau

1. Disavow,
Suffer, Slave, Expire CS
2. Cold Sore / The Light, Split 7"
3. Daisy Glaze,
Kings of the Fuzz Style CS
4. NY In 64, *NY64* LP
5. Space Alien Donald,
Must Be Funny CS

Paul Silver

1. Awesomefest 10, San Diego: especially The Arrivals, Melted, Young Go Hards, and the surprise Rumspringer reunion
2. This Is My Fest 3, Oakland: every single band killed it!
3. Great Apes, *California Heart* LP
4. Four Lights,
Death to False Posi LP
5. toyGuitar, *Move Like a Ghost* EP

Replay Dave

• Robert Pollard,
Is Off to Business LP
• Tim Version / Dead Bars, Split 7"
• Tired From Now On,
Romantic LP
• Tomahawk, *Oddfellows* LP
• Nick Cave, *The Skeleton Tree* LP

Rich Cocksedge

• Against Me!, *Shape Shift with Me*
• Stiff Little Fingers, *Best Served Loud* (new live album)
• Low Culture, *Places to Hide*
• The Dissociates, *After Hours at the Violet Club* EP
• Wonk Unit, *Mr Splashy,* tie with The War Goes On, Self-titled

Rosie Gonce

• Sheer Mag, *III* EP
• Mean Jeans,
Tight New Dimension LP
• The King Khan & BBQ Show,
Bad News Boys LP
• The Orwells, *Disgraceland* LP
• The Orwells, *Buddy* single

Ryan Nichols

1. Marisco's Hector #1
2. Hurula
3. Budos Band
4. Dwight Twilley
5. Vats, *Green Glass Room*

Sal Lucci

1. Gospel Truth, *Jealous Fires* LP
2. Nots, *Cosmetic* LP
3. Coneheads, *LP 1* LP
4. James Arthur's Manhunt,
Digital Clubbing LP
5. LSDogs, live

Sam Grinberg

Five Comics I've Recently Read and Now Recommend
1. *Ruins* by Peter Kuper
2. *Patience* by Daniel Clowes
3. *Shampoo* by Liam Cobb
4. *Big Kids* by Michael DeForge
5. *Generous Bosom: Part One* by Conor Stechschulte

Sean Arenas

• Tadaima, *Whatever Feels Good* CS
• Brat Kings, *Hypnopedia* LP
• Steppe People,
Can I get a ride? digital
• toyGuitar,
Move Like a Ghost CDEP
• Pure Disgust, Self-titled LP

Sean Koepenick

Used Bin Finds at Smash and Joint Custody (DC)
1. The Sex Pistols, *"Revolution in the Classroom" b/w "Schools Are Prisons"* 7"
2. The Damned,
Live Shepperton 1980 LP
3. The Ergs, *Thrash Compactor* 7"
4. Chelsea, *Evacuate* LP
5. Reptile House, *I Stumble as the Crow Flies* 7"

Simone Carter

• Christian Fitness,
This Taco Is Not Correct LP
• True Widow, *Avvolgere* LP
• Goblin Cock,
Necronomidonkeykongimicon LP
• Greys, *Warm Shadow* LP
• Nick Cave And The Bad Seeds,
Skeleton Tree LP

Steve Adamyk

1. The Jolts, *No Paradoxes* LP
2. The Scientists,
A Place Called Bad 2 x LP
3. Dow Jones & The Industrials,
Can't Stand the Midwest 2 x LP
4. Sonic Avenues, *Disconnector* LP
5. Sievehead, live

Susan de Place

New Vinyl for My DJ Set at the Razorcake 15 Year Anniversary Party (and Song Played)
1. The Pandoras, "*Hot Generation" b/w "You Don't Satisfy"* 45 ("Hot Generation")
2. The Stops, *Nameless Faces* LP ("Repulsive")
3. Sissy, *Gave Birth to a Mum* 7" ("Attack")
4. Peluqueria Canina, *Jovenes Promesas* LP ("Mil Demonios")
5. La URSS, *Maravillas del Mundo* LP ("Pasos que Agitan el Polvo")

Tim Brooks

• Vanity, *Don't Be Shy* LP
• Crown Court, *Capital Offence* LP
• Woodboot, *Black Piss* 7"
• The War Goes On LP
• Ultra, *Espana Invertebrada* 7"

Todd Taylor

• Razorcake Quinceañera: La Tuya with La Victoria and Desidia, live
• C.C.T.V., Self-titled 7"
• Awesome Fest 10
• Descendents, *Hypercaffium Spazzinate* LP
• Vanity, *Don't Be Shy* LP
• Rixe, *Les Nerfs a Vif* 7"

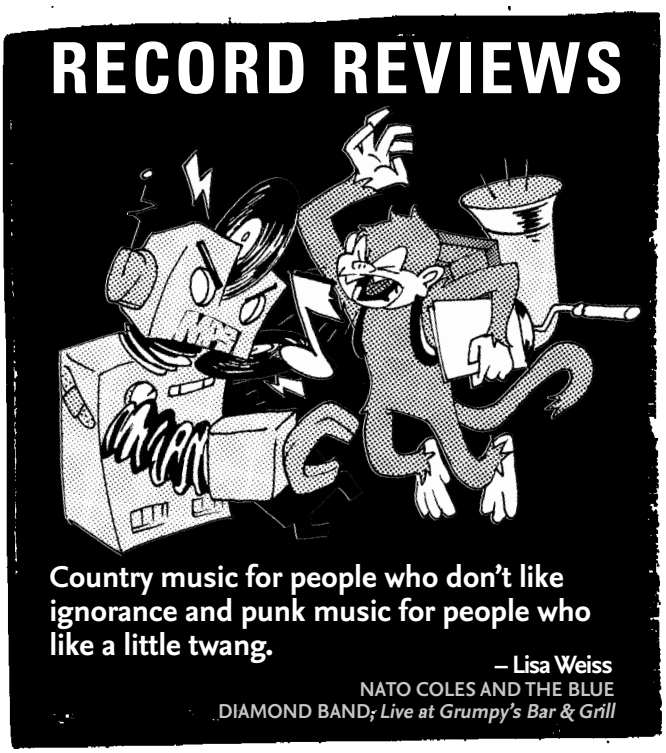
Tommy Vandervort

1. Off With Their Heads and Swingin' Utters at Cobra Lounge
2. The Bollweevils and Break Anchor at Liars Club
3. Canadian Rifle and Daylight Robbery at Empty Bottle
4. The Falcon, *Gather the Chaps* LP
5. Pu$$y-Cow 7" and shirt from Joe Dana

Ty Stranglehold

Top 5 Bands I Saw Live in 1993
1. Rocket From The Crypt
2. Nomeansno
3. Dead Milkmen
4. Big Drill Car
5. SNFU

RECORD REVIEWS



Country music for people who don't like ignorance and punk music for people who like a little twang.

– Lisa Weiss

NATO COLES AND THE BLUE DIAMOND BAND*; Live at Grumpy's Bar & Grill*

A.M. NICE: Self-titled: LP
This trio from Cincinnati reminds me of a slightly heavier version of some of the most popular of the Midwest mid-'90s emo bands, like Braid, The Promise Ring, Boys Life or maybe even Hot Rod Circuit or Shiner. A.M. Nice doesn't sound like any single one of these bands, but instead imagine a mix of all of them, but then add in the heavy, bass-driven rhythm section of Pegboy. Throw in a dash of Dischord Records influence. And… that is *exactly* what this sounds like to me, and it fucking rules. Aesthetically, they get it too, with a '90s-style screened cover and insert really pulling everything together. It's really, really good in a '90s throwback kind of way. –Mark Twistworthy (Phratry, phratryrecords.com)

ANNO SENZA ESTATE: *MMXVI:* 7"
This eleven-track mini-album by Anno Senza Estate is tripping me out in the absolute best way possible. Audibly inspired by Dead Kennedys, Circle Jerks, and Dwarves, A.S.E. stays true to the dogma of their idols, lauding them with offerings of compact, catchy cuts. And though they sing solely in Italian, there's an insert included in the 7" with all of their lyrics translated into English. Which is pretty sweet, because they read more like the tenets of Buddhist teaching than the trite, fuck-the-establishment diatribes we've all come to expect from unimaginative punk bands. Seriously worth checking out, and you can thank me later. Namaste. –Simone Carter (Punti Scena, puntiscenarec@gmail.com, puntiscenarecords.wordpress.com / 1332, email1332records@yahoo.com, 1332records.com)

ANTI-PASTI: *Rise Up:* CD/LP
Back in the 1980s, I was a huge fan of Anti-Pasti's debut album, *The Last Call*, but didn't really get into the follow up, *Caution in the Wind*, and gradually lost interest in what the band was doing. I never would have thought that 2016 would find me listening to a new album by the band, let alone actually enjoying it. A few recent releases from reformed bands have been fairly awful, so I really didn't know what to expect from *Rise Up*. I ended up being pleasantly surprised. It turned out to be a good listen. Musical proficiency and a new singer (who has since parted ways with the band) are in evidence and Anti-Pasti has subsequently managed to deliver a solid album. It's far from breaking new ground but it does a good job of finding a place in today's punk scene and is lyrically relevant to the world we find ourselves in. –Rich Cocksedge (Westworld, westworldrecordings.co.uk)

ANTISEEN / HE WHO CANNOT BE NAMED: Split: 7"
Fans of The Dwarves and ANTiSEEN aren't the only people who will get a kick out of this split. ANTiSEEN overcame major tragedy by forging on after the death of guitarist Joe Young, with their recent recordings and live shows being just as potent as anything they've done previously. This four-song split includes three originals and an ANTiSEEN cover of Rupture's "If I Had a Thousand Dollars." The He Who Cannot Be Named side is super poppy and fun, making both sides essential. He Who Cannot Be Named ought to release more solo material, as it's all kicked major ass so far. As is always the case with Rusty Knuckles, the packaging is first rate, and it's on colored vinyl. This split comes highly recommended. –Art Ettinger (Rusty Knuckles, rustyknucklesmusic.com)

ARMS ALOFT:
***What a Time to be Barely Alive:* CD**
Politically and socially aware emotive pop punk. I'd be shocked if there wasn't already an audience for this band. I once went to three Strike Anywhere shows in a row and had a pretty good time. I think it was in 2001. Anyway, the booklet that comes with this CD is really nice. This record is kind of like if whoever made *Spy Kids* re-made *Fahrenheit 451*. –Matt Werts (Red Scare / Eager Beaver)

BAD FUTURE: Self-titled: LP
Cascading hardcore-influenced punk from Seattle, Wash. Swelling guitars offset the building vocals until both break into ruthless, crashing waves of dissonant, destructive energy. It's disastrous and triumphant. There's just enough melody to keep it from spiraling out into an atonal blur, but anything that can be perceived as "catchy" depends entirely on how damaged the listener is. This is attack music. Reverse drug bust music. Smash the bank windows and light the dumpsters on fire; there's no turning back. –Daryl (Dirt Cult)

BAD MECHANICS:
***Must Be a Suburb:* EP**
Real heavy weirdo art punk. The vocals are more spoken than sung in the verses, though they let loose in the chorus of the title track. This EP has three tracks, one of which is a clean version of "Must Be a Suburb" which is confusing to me. Is this so that they can get played on the radio? Two things baffle me if that is the case: A) DIY punk bands don't get played on the radio at the level that could Green Day your career, and B) who the fuck listens to the radio anymore? For the record, I love public radio and underground stations, but we just don't live in a time where people are tuning in on their Walkmans anymore. But whatever. You do you, Bad Mechanics. Once I got into the rap/rock style shouty vocals, I started to really enjoy it. The backup vocalist is rad as hell. It's interesting and different, but I really hope they don't try and go the radio/corporate rock route. As it stands now, I could see them opening for Andrew W. K., or maybe putting out a split with The Blood Brothers. –Kayla Greet (Stonewalled, stonewalled.ninja)

BAD SPORTS: *Living with Secrets:* LP
I had the good fortune of hearing this a year ago, when the head honcho at Dirtnap gave me a preview when I stopped in at his record store—Green Noise in Portland, Ore.—and professed my love for the Denton mafia responsible for the Reds, Marked Men, Radioactivity, Video, et. al. I was frothing at the mouth to get my mitts on a copy, and am happy it's finally here. The seven songs here cover a lot of ground—the opener, "Don't Get Your Hopes Up," sounds like it was cribbed straight out of the catchier pages of Mission Of Burma's playbook, and from there it's a steep dive into anthemic punk, deconstructionist pop that recalls early Jesus And Mary Chain and Buzzcocks' artier fringes, before they climb back into straight pop that even manages a very subtle echo of the Smiths—but they maintain throughout the thread of the deceptively simple approach that is the earmark of the myriad bands to which they're related. Aces, this is. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dirtnap)

BIB: Self-titled: EP
Hardcore punk that takes more cues from the semi recent past than what happened decades ago. The whole thing sounds like it's buried under a din of white noise and everything was recorded in a large, open room. The vocals have a slight nasal shrill that has a way of floating off into the noise instead of burrowing into your ears. Tempos range from moderately fast to slow and trudging, often in one song. "Pressure" is my favorite of the bunch with its shambling tempo and the perfectly placed pause at the opening. –Matt Average (Deranged, derangedyouth@hotmail.com, derangedrecords.com)

BLEAK: *No Light No Tunnel:* CD
These cats put the hammer down from the first note and don't let up until they run out of grooves. Chaotic, dissonant, and downright assaultive hardcore is the order of the day here—flailing tempo changes, pummeled stringed instruments, and a cat that sounds like he's pulling howls from the bottom of his feet, through his body, and across vocal cords that don't stand a chance. The sound for your next abscessed tooth. –Jimmy Alvarado (Hex, hexrecords.bigcartel.com)

BLOODSHOT BILL & SHANNON SHAW: *"Honey Time" b/w "Time":* 7"
Bloodshot Bill is a pompadour-swinging one-man band, while Shannon Shaw is the soulful crooner and bassist for Shannon And The Clams. Together, they provide two fuzzy rockabilly tunes, with scorching riffs and blown-out vocals. It's a dang shame that both songs aren't particularly memorable. Been there, heard that. –Sean Arenas (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

BOILERMAN:
***Feels Ways about Stuff:* LP**
Boilerman is a trio from Chicago that plays furious pop punk; I'm talking tattered Void shirts and worn out Jawbreaker cassettes. The thirteen songs are over in a blur, and the living room is a wreck: broken guitar strings, a cracked snare head, shattered picture frames that fell off the wall because of the overdriven bass, and vocal cords shredded beyond repair. Boilerman is snarly, blown out, and worth a listen. –Sean Arenas (86'd, 86drec.com)

BONEHEAD: *You:* 7" EP
Bonehead self-describes as "trashed pop," and I hear it: this EP sounds like if the Shangri-Las smoked

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weed or Dolly Mixture on downers. Though these brief, bare-bones pop songs conjure girl-group harmonies, Bonehead is in fact one Alexandra Lee, who writes, plays, and produces. "Take out the Trash" is even fuzzy enough to recall the Yeah Yeah Yeahs, but with Waitresses-style deadpan vocals. The whole record is a dream; perfect music for being a girl and doing drugs. Highly recommended (to even the sober non-girls). –Lyle (Ms.45, bonehead.bandcamp.com)

BONG MOUNTAIN:
***You're Doin' Great (For the Record):* LP**
The first thing that caught my attention about Bong Mountain was their terrible, terrible band name. It actually stopped me from listening to them when I heard clamors of their greatness earlier this year. But as luck should have it, I found myself in Pittsburgh playing against their drummer in the world's largest pinball tournament and he sent me their record. It's music by people who grew up on Avail and grew into Iron Chic. They pull no punches with their poetic lyricism and back it up with beautiful melodies laid over a punk beat. Much like Dillinger Four, they put their tongues in their cheeks when writing song titles. "Don't Shred on Me" is the stand out track for me. While flipping through their lyric booklet (complete with awesome illustrations), I resonated with the words to that song before I even heard it. The song is unbridled motivation to stop moving through life in an unproductive haze and it touches on things that many people struggle with. Their depiction of depression in these lyrics is pretty striking: "You can sleep past noon again / no one will come and wake you up / You won't have to see the sun all day with any luck / You can keep on doing just enough to live." And these words are spouted, crooner like, over a jangly guitar with a Western kind of tone. There's just enough fidelity in this recording that feels both like a sweaty basement show and a cozy afternoon at home. Pun intended, they rip. I guess there really ain't no Bong Mountain high enough to keep me from loving them. –Kayla Greet (Stonewalled, stonewalled.ninja)

BOSS EYE: *Plays Cottage Vortex:* LP
Ride on the wave of uncertainty. Chaotically constructed, but meticulously crafted, this Big Black-esque noise rock monstrosity hits all the right notes and a few wrong ones at the right time. Massive shifts in content and tone happen without batting an eye. Aesthetically, the record cover gives you a perfect picture of what you're in store for: seemingly random, but angular, sections cut out by hand. The music feels like it's missing something, but in the way of addition by subtracting. It lacks melodies and standard music construction techniques in a way that allows the crazy ideas to breathe and expand. Good stuff. –Bryan Static (Twistworthy, twistworthy.com)

BRAT KINGS: *Hypnopedia:* LP
Brat Kings, who hail from "The Great White North," play gritty garage punk'n'roll in the vein of Rocket From The Crypt, Rough Kids, and Testors. Although they feature Chance from Sonic Avenues, Brat Kings are less poppy and more serrated, with vocal cord-shredding melodies and guitars that cut like a knife. The lo-fi production is never shrill, as the noise and distortion highlight the sweat-drenched, bass-driven basement punk tone of *Hypnopedia*'s twelve songs, which they execute with surgical precision, from the blindingly fast ("Control," "Rat Tail," "Moths") to the dark and brooding ("Last Sun" and "Meat Kitchen"). This is an incredible first LP, with a lot of staying power. File this alongside *Automatic Midnight* and *On the Outside*. –Sean Arenas (Brain Gum, braingumrecords.bigcartel.com / Dirt Cult, dirtcultrecords.com)

BRAVER: *Torpor:* LP
I can't tell you how refreshing it is to get a record from a band you've never listened to and then instantly love it. *Torpor* opens up with antics that make me think of Dillinger Four as they switch from goofing about to a strong and raucous guitar riff. It's the vocals that grab me. Somehow they're a mix of Josh Caterer (Smoking Popes) and Dan Lord (Pain), with the cadence of Emily Whitehurst (Tsunami Bomb). The singing carries over the obvious measure breaks and time signature changes in a way that's not jarring at all. They undulate along with the jagged melodic guitar until it's time to run off on their own. Braver's rhythm section pummels—especially the drums. They're really making a stark dichotomy between the beautiful crooning and the heavy fills. At the beginning of "Little Girl Soldier" there's this gorgeous refrain that the guitar does just a few times throughout the song and it's intoxicating. Where I think this record falls short is in the samples and non musical bits that they sprinkle throughout. It only happens three times, but I feel that it detracts from *Torpor*'s beauty. "Les Enfants Terribles" is the slow burn of the record and it is just as intelligent, emotional, and pretty as the fast songs. I played this three times in a row and I may just flip it over once more. "Swim through debris / Drown, rinse, repeat." –Kayla Greet (Do What?)

BRONXXX:
***Poser Now Poser Forever:* LP**
Frenetic Japanese skate punk. Sounds like they've spent a lot of time listening to U.S. hardcore bands making the rounds during the mid-'80s, and the results are often reminiscent of DS-13… and then they go off on some quasi-funk dancey tangent every now and then. There's a sense of humor infused in this, and the clean-channel guitars also give it an occasional Freeze feel. Throw in cover art by Tim Kerr and you have yourself a party. –Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

BRONZED SUMMER, THE: ***Summering:*** **CD**
I have to get my bias out of the way: I am not really a fan of mellow instrumental music. Despite that, I went the due diligence route and sat through most of all the songs. The first track, "Don't Go to that Pool Party," starts off exactly the way you might expect—a little summery and shimmery and a lot mellow. About halfway through it gets some decently heavy riffs but they disappear quickly. And that's about as heavy as the album ever gets. The ninth track, "Decollage," has some weird audio clips and a sort of creepy feeling reminiscent of Godspeed! but, again, it dissipates soon after it begins. Overall, this is for those who like their instrumentals more Pinback and less Pelican. Not bad, but not for me. –Nicole X (Doubleplusgood, doubleplusgoodrecords.com)

BUG FIX: ***Chocolate Nerve: 7"*** **EP**
This is fun, brash, melodic punk from Minneapolis, and it hits all the Midwestern high notes, from a Replacements-y riff to vocals that sound Cap'n Jazz-y at moments. With not a single track over ninety seconds long, this record gets the job of rocking done with remarkable precision. It's literally tight. –Lyle (Minneapolis Limited, mplsltd.com)

BUM OUT: ***Pain Don't Hurt:*** **CS**
Because I am who I am, I cannot separate my experience with Bum Out (and related/former band Come And Take It) from the music on this tape. Here's what's important: This a record of angry music created by pleasant dudes. It's chaotic and formula-defying, much like the bulk of the '80s SST catalog. Watching them is sometimes enough to trick me for a brief moment that the '80s rock alternative culture is still around. You'll hear some Hüsker Dü trappings, you'll hear some Dinosaur Jr. choruses, and some Replacements swagger in the hooks. It's nostalgia for the *This Band Could Be Your Life*-era by some guys who mean every note, every chord. Recommended whole-heartedly. –Bryan Static (Twistworthy, twistworthy.com)

BURNING LADY: ***Human Condition: CD***
Wow, this takes me back to the golden age of Fat Wreck Chords. Not that the label has been all that shabby in recent years, but there was a time when the sounds of their roster were a little more consolidated. Even though Burning Lady describes themselves as street punk, I think they fall more in line with the late '90s skate punk/pop punk intersection. Either way, what's on this record is loud and melodic punk with diversity in its songwriting. Something akin to Tilt with a little bit of a Red Dons twist. Recommended! –Bryan Static (Concrete Jungle, concretejunglerecords.com)

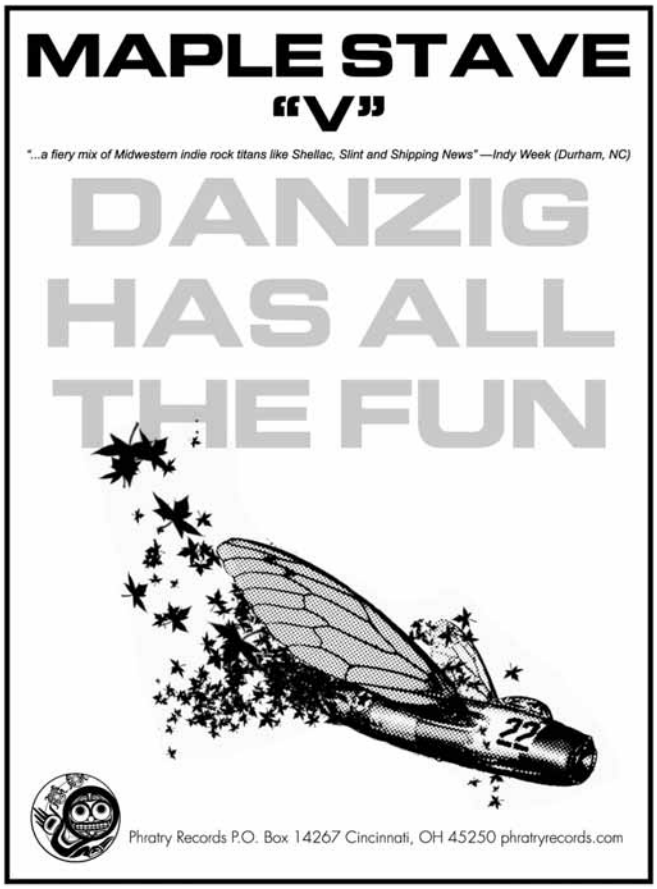
CAPTAIN 9'S & THE KNICKERBOCKER TRIO: ***Starting a Rock'n'Roll Grease Fire:*** **LP**
Formed as a two-piece in 1982, C9&TKT were one of the few bands of the basement hardcore era to turn their hoses on garage-trash-punk-and-roll-and-nothing-but. And, while I have never been quite as in awe of this band's body of work as other members of my sewing circle, it's hard to not have a good time listening to this basement-load of wee, rattly songs about burning things down, giving girls lecherous stares, and Fistfight Saturday Nights. This particular package is a mash-up of "greatest hits"—such as they are—and unheard nuggets of Captain 9-ey glory, and if you've ever heard a more (presumably intentionally) fucked up version of Bobby Day's "Rockin' Robin," I'll shake your damn hand nude. BEST SONG: "Let's Burn Something." BEST SONG TITLE: "Hubba Hubba." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: "Captain 9's" is also the name of an Ohio pizzeria. –Rev. Nørb (Rerun, rerunrecordsstl.com)

CCR HEADCLEANER: ***Tear Down the Wall:*** **CD**
Stoner-sludge noise rock, heavy on all the stuff that ensures a bad trip. As with much of what In The Red peddles, this has the subtlety of a well-placed pipe to the forehead—loud, over the top and likely to leave your eardrums bleeding if you're not careful... and you don't wanna be "careful." –Jimmy Alvarado (In The Red)

CHARLES ALBRIGHT / CROISSANTS, THE: Split: LP
Croissants' got that Adolescents sound, both literally and figuratively. High energy, upcycled, previously released "We're in the Basement" sparks into five unapologetically whiny Ramones-esque punk songs full of tight riffs and non-stop slamming drums. Definitely "Trashworthy." Charles Albright dishes up plenty of unrelenting feedback and signature wail over six songs that simply rip. The songs are also upcycled from previous releases, and I can't say I'm disappointed to hear them again. "Short Skirt" and "I'm Just a Fine Young Man and I'm Doing So Well" happen to be my personal faves, so the cherry picking was on point. –Camylle Reynolds (SAC, Pleasant Screams)

CHARLEY 'UNGRY: ***"Who Is My Killer?" b/w "Time to Go": 7"***
Hozac is doing a good job with their archival arm. Their taste in reissues is worth checking out in general. But besides the great punk and power pop gems, their taste in glam is pleasantly esoteric. Charley 'Ungry is a great example of a full-on glam rocker walking the line between proto punk and early English glam. Of course, everyone won't like that, but if you're into hi-quality early glam with fuzzy, melodic guitar solos and echo-laden choruses, this is a good one for you. –Billups Allen (Hozac)

CHIXDIGGIT: ***2012:*** **CD**
What really needs to be said about this band? *2012* isn't going to sour any fans at this point. It's exactly what you'd expect; more in line with the equally great *Safeways: Here We Come* EP



that came out a few years back. KJ and the lads are back again (this being the first record to feature Jimmy Gamble on guitar), this time veering closer to rock-opera/concept album territory. I mean, as close to that as you can get, given that they're still Chixdiggit songs after all, but it's definitely a one-track CD (not sure how the LP has been split up or sequenced), and more-or-less a single song, for that matter, chronicling the time they spent on the road in ye-olde 2012. It's a fun ride. On that note, if you've yet to see them live, they're a must-see. I typically can't handle sets that are longer than thirty minutes, but when Chixdiggit play, ninety minutes fly by, leaving everyone wanting more. They're that entertaining. *2012*'s great, so let's hear it for Chixdiggit. –Steve Adamyk (Fat, fatwreck.com)

CHRON TURBINE: *II:* CS
Chron Turbine's label describes them aptly as dark destruct-o-pop, and *II* is filled with eight tracks that will keep any fan of weird shit entertained. This tape is seriously weird and I mean that in the most respectful, complimentary way. It's cool in this post-something kind of way where I hear death rock and really polished Interpol-y stuff and even funky Devo vibes coming through, but also obvious hardcore and noise elements. There are really spacey moments like "Love and Infection" that's got heavy goth T. Rex feels and some octave things going on; "Hipster Amnesia" gives some serious Rites Of Spring vibes; then weird, angular linear shit shows up in a bunch of other tracks just as soon as you think you figured their formula out. *II* has a healthy mix of heaviness and grit throughout and it never stops moving. Limited to one hundred, the physical tape has this super hardcore aesthetic with a silk screened cover and sticker in there. A pretty great way to spend five dollars, in my opinion. –Candace Hansen (Peterwalkee)

CLOWNS: *Bad Blood:* CD/LP
A friend of mine picked this up for me at this year's Rebellion and having played it many times, I'm gutted that I missed out on seeing these Aussies whilst they were in the U.K. during the summer. For the main part, it's high-paced, catchy hardcore—a bit like Kid Dynamite with some metal flourishes thrown in for good measure. The opening track gestates into a whirlwind of guitars, drums, and throat-shredding vocals, and this generally remains the modus operandi throughout until reaching the fourteenth and final track. Here things take a darker turn, as "Human Terror" displays a more measured delivery for over eight minutes, then another maelstrom is unleashed before it winds down to a close. –Rich Cocksedge (Poison City, poisoncityrecords.com, info@poisoncityrecords.com)

COLD SORE / LIGHT, THE: Split: 7"
This split is a great introduction to two solid new bands. Cold Sore features members of Shut Up, Altars, and a slew of other bands and plays blistering fast hardcore with aggressive, political lyrics. While I dug Cold Sore, it was The Light that I was most stoked on. In the span of only two gritty and distorted tracks they churn out a barrage of intensity that bowled me over musically. Lyrically, the band's cold nihilism is dark and bleak, a stark contrast to their name. With members of No Statik and Scrotum Grinder, you're missing out if you don't shine a little of The Light on your turntable. –Paul J. Comeau (King Of The Monsters)

CROSS STITCH: *Until I Find You:* CS
I forget where I heard it, and I'm not going to get the quote right, but somebody smart said that when you're going to make something, look for the void—look for the thing that doesn't exist that you *want* to exist, and make that thing. Cross Stitch seem to have hit on the idea of creating an all-female Sebadoh, which is the thing we all needed without knowing we needed it. They're also one of the best contemporary American post-punk bands, which is no small feat. I think they may have broken up, which is a loss we're only beginning to deal with. We still have this tape, and specifically "Blue Blue." –Matt Werts (Peterwalkee, peterwalkeerecords.com / Bitch Face, bitchfacerecords.storenvy.com)

CROWN COURT: *Capital Offence:* LP
Why are punk kids better at playing skinhead music than true skins? Battle Ruins, Rixe, Hard Skin anyone? Here's another for the pile. Made up of a bunch of London faces, this band put together a fantastic oi record. From the opening bass and drums of "Sammy Skyves," I knew this was going to cook. I always attest that the best music always appears to be simple but is far from it. The dudes in this band have been studying their history and taken the best guitar tone from the Templars, the street rock from the Business, and the toughness of the 4-Skins. The recording and tone is pretty much perfect and the songs are about as good as you get. Top fucking class, gents. –Tim Brooks (Katorga Works, katorgaworks.bigcartel.com)

CULT OF LIP, THE: *Right Now: 7"* EP
I got a cassette copy of My Bloody Valentine's *Loveless* for review back when I was writing for the local college newspaper. I plopped it in and, like many others, was overwhelmed by its sonic density. It got a lot of airplay around the office. After a while, however, I became aware of a woozy quality buried in the tracks and was soon convinced that the cassette was somehow warped. I bought another copy, and it, too, sounded warped. I eventually decided it added a layer of "interesting" to it and listened to it as-is. It wasn't until some time later, when a homeboy's girlfriend was listening to a CD of the album that I realized that warped sound was intentional. Though the current release under discussion isn't a MBV knockoff, it does share some similar qualities with the aforementioned album—woozy guitars, howling feedback, even

the odd, brief interstitial noise, but between songs. These kids, however, eschew the shoegaze angle for a more direct angle. The reverb-drenched vocals bring mind Subterranean Records obscuros Pre Fix, and the instrumentation owes more to an art punk/pop sensibility than Cocteau Twins. Their efforts are largely successful, delivering tracks that are both creative enough to give 'em some wiggle room and engaging enough to invite many more listens. –Jimmy Alvarado (Mpls Ltd., mplsltd.com)

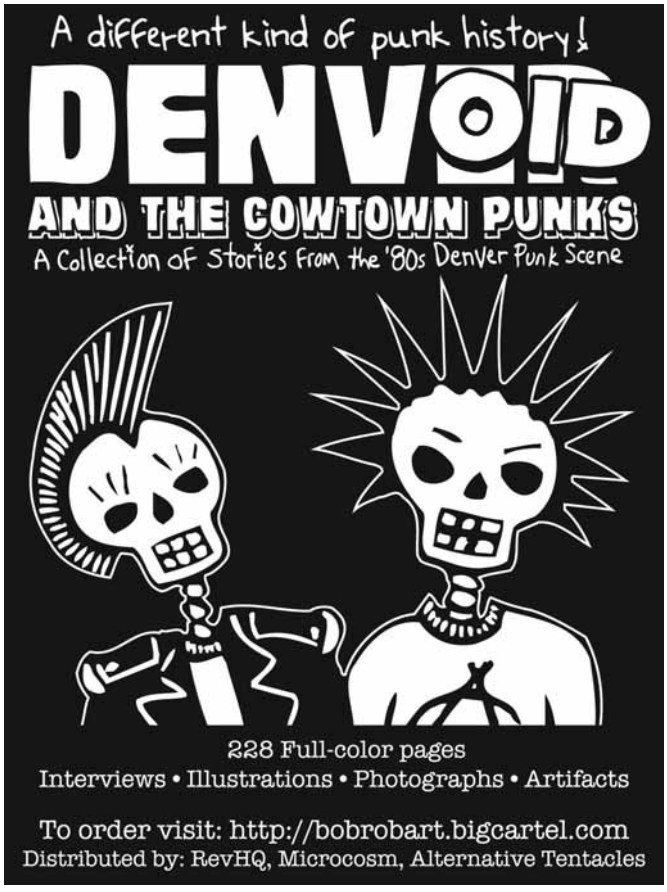
CULT VALUES: Self-titled: LP
Cult Values are a mix of punk, hardcore, and post-punk. It's a strange mix that somehow works. The vocalist sounds like Martin from Career Suicide, and the music is a combination of Rough Kids, Killing Joke, and Joy Division (especially "Parallel"), but played at fast speeds. While I do like this record—on the whole it doesn't flow like a cohesive album. It is instead a collection of songs, which are all good, but could benefit from something linking them together and creating an overall mood that hooks you in for the duration. That said, I do like this, and am curious, like a cat, about what they will do next. –Matt Average (Deranged, derangedyouth@hotmail.com, derangedrecords.com)

CULTURE SHOCK: *Attention Span:* CD
I'm not interested in bands reforming, cashing in, and realizing their youth slipped away so they try to claw it back by rehashing their old shit. Dick Lucas from the Subhumans, Citizen Fish, and Culture Shock does not fit into that category. He has been relentlessly playing and touring in bands since the late '70s on a one hundred percent DIY level. Culture Shock hit me at the absolute zenith of my youth. Their second LP came out when I was sixteen and is part of many memories of life, love, and punk that it's impossible for me to be objective. Culture Shock came on the back of the waning anarcho punk movement after the Subhumans split, blending anarcho punk with ska and reggae. At a time when the punks moved from squats into buses and free festivals, dreadlocks, Stonehenge, and living life outside of society. At sixteen years old, this rejection of society made more sense to me than the fighting the system attitude of bands like Conflict. Culture Shock played free festivals and pushed the ideals of self-sufficiency and community. Listening to the newly reformed Culture Shock, I'm taken right back to the mid-'80s, I cannot believe how this new record sounds like it was recorded just after their last LP even though it was some twenty-five years ago. Fantastic anarcho punk (with some ska to keep it bouncing) with positive lyrics about an alternative to this shit we do on the day to day. I'm a cynical fuck, but this record (as good as any of their others) made me smile—and, for a second—believe we can make a change. –Tim Brooks (Alternative Tentacles, alternativetentacles.com)

DAN WEBB AND THE SPIDERS / MODERN SAINTS: Split: 7"
Dan Webb And The Spiders: I love these guys. They write these kind of sturdy, unhurried garage songs that are full of deceptively simple melodies and a kind of busted-up, careworn quality that rarely gets old. Two great new songs from them. Modern Saints: a three-piece from Germany whose pair of songs remind me a *lot* of Hi Ho Silver, Away!—earnest, bittersweet, nuanced pop punk. They wouldn't be out of place on the It's Alive! roster at all. Also, a thumbs up to Shawn Higgins and David Finke, who did some beautiful work (art and layout, respectively) on this record. Green vinyl, DL code, semi-transparent lyric sheet, screen-printed chipboard packaging. Awesome, awesome record all around. –Keith Rosson (Gunner)

DANCING CIGARETTES: *Dance Dogs Dance:* LP
Avant garde-damaged pop is one way of describing this long-gone Bloomington, Ind. group. *Dance Dogs Dance* is a collection of recordings made between 1981 and 1983, after their 7" EP on Gulcher. They play catchy and jagged rhythms that bring to mind Gang Of Four, but less heavy handed. Synthesizers run in tandem with one guitar for texture and tone, while the saxophone (an instrument that seemed to peak in usage in the early '80s—and I think it's high time it has a comeback) appears from time to time for some atmosphere and class. There isn't one clunker on here, and one will wonder why this stuff never made it to vinyl back when it was originally recorded. It's that good. This is one of the kinds of music that I love being pointed towards, or discovering, and obsessing over. –Matt Average (Magnetic South, magneticsouthrecordings.com)

DEADBEATS: *666-1313:* 2 x LP
First things first. Yes, this is a new double-album from *that* Deadbeats, one of Los Angeles's first, hardest, and flat-out weirdest punk bands. Sporadically active over the decades, they've been seen in recent years blowing other bands off local stages with shows that look like they were the result of some sorta collaboration between Freud, De Sade, and Herschell Gordon Lewis—chomped brains, femme fatale nurses, leather masks, blow-up dolls, and a laundry list of delightful debauchery. The twenty songs here are much along the lines of their "classic" material: dissonant noise mongering providing the base, with heavy doses of swing, free jazz, complex rhythmic changes, and maybe even a bit of Kurt Weill thrown in for good measure, meted out by an ensemble that's more orchestra than traditional "band." Like their legendary live performances, the tunes are sure to challenge the sensibilities of the average punter who's looking for *exactly* the same formulaic sonic and lyrical bullshit they get from every other band, but those willing to dive in will find much here that rocks with the kind of crucial chaotic abandon that



attracted so many to this "punk" thing so long ago. Good? Shit, I'd go so far as to say this is one of the best albums outta Los Angeles's underground in years. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deep Six Albatross, scottguerin@gmail.com)

DEAMONS: *Best Outta You!:* CS
What the fuck are these guys talking about? I feel like I would have to be from Deamons' hometown to understand these songs, and I want to do that. They sing about Hemingway and Crimea and a can of beans and a Green Man and a "Cake Party at 9 PM." The music is grungy, half-Misfits punk. The vocals are supplied by a small goblin. This is so dumb, I love it. The dumbness is pure and good. –Matt Werts (Fucking Scam, fuckingscam.bandcamp.com)

DEATH BY STEREO: *Just Like You'd Leave Us. We've Left You for Dead:* CDEP
From time to time, I get the urge to listen to super melodic yet heavy hardcore. You can sure do a lot worse than Death By Stereo. These guys have been at it for a long time, and they have their set dialed. Six songs that fit in with the rest of their extensive catalog. I guess when you do something good, why change it? –Ty Stranglehold (Concrete Jungle)

DEEP POCKETS: *Nice Life: 7"* EP
Lotta mid-tempo rock influence in evidence here, but there is also a heavy vein of mid-'80s DC underground popping up all over the place. Songs are engaging, a bit more complex than may be apparent at first blush, and are arty without being too pretentious. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

DEVIOUS ONES: Self-titled*:* CS
If this was 1999, these guys could be the kings of Mutant Pop Records, although they might actually have been slightly too punk and slightly too un-insipid to rule that particular roost. The band appears to believe they've been influenced by Johnny Thunders, the Boys, and the Buzzcocks—and who am I to say otherwise?—but to my weathered tympanic membranes they sound more like a cross between the Briefs and Teenage Bottlerocket or contemporary soulmates thereof. I dig a fair portion of this, but, come on, boys, a *cassette*? When I get a cassette I plan to play it exactly once. Ergo, it was nice while it lasted! We'll always have Paris! *Enjoy the marvels of magnetic tape!* BEST SONG: "Little Intruder" or "Dollar Cans and Also Rans." BEST SONG TITLE: Same. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Recorded by Jim Diamond! Everybody piss their pants! –Rev. Nørb (Peterwalkee, peterwalkeerecords.com)

DINOS BOYS: *Last Ones:* CS
"Leave a message at the beep, huh? Leave a message, Dino? Yeah, I got a frickin' message for you! I got a message for you, Dino! *Your boys are in my garage again, okay?* Busted right in! Set up their little amplifiers, put on their leather jackets, slicked their hair back with that pomade crap. When I went in there to stop 'em, one of them threatened me with a switchblade, Dino! This is how you and your boys treat your brother-in-law? Them playing their revved-up '60s punk, all tinny and smash-y like the Beach Boys on garbage drugs? And you, Dino, not returning my calls? Not picking up the phone? This is not how you treat people, Dino? *Come get your boys!"* –Keith Rosson (Dead Broke)

DINOSAUR JR: *Give a Glimpse of What Yer Not:* CD/LP
I don't know what it is about Dinosaur Jr., but they always do me pretty well. I was into most of their albums from before their breakup and yet the newer material also strikes me well. That being said, much of it has begun to sound redundant. There's not a lot of progression from album to album: J. Mascis's slackerish, mopey vocals and shredding guitar solos, Murph's strong and reliable drumming, and Lou Barlow's bass somewhere in the background with his vocals occasionally popping up on a couple tracks. Yet the band continues to reach me in an emotional way, and that goes especially for Barlow on this album. His two contributions to *Give a Glimpse of What Yer Not,* "Love Is…" and "Left/Right" are meaningful and touching. In fact, "Love Is…" is the strongest song on the album, with a solid guitar solo from J. This is what happens when DJ is hitting on all cylinders instead of leaving it as a project under the authority of Mascis. That's not to say Barlow should be singing on every track, as there's something reliable and comforting with Mascis's vocals. For example, "Be a Part" gives me goosebumps when I hear the mournful guitar and the delicate organ meeting up with Mascis's restrained voice. And as long as a band can resonate with me in an emotional manner, I'm gonna keep listening, regardless of any redundancy. –Kurt Morris (Jagjaguwar)

DISASTER STRIKES: *In the Age of Corporate Personhood:* CD
Excellent politically charged melodic hardcore featuring thematically focused lyrics, without taking themselves too seriously, from the fine folks at Alternative Tentacles. The title track features Jello Biafra helping out with an intro and backing vocals. I was surprisingly unfamiliar with this band, so it's nice to know they've been added to the ATR roster. Good stuff here. –Steve Adamyk (Alternative Tentacles, alternativetentacles.com)

DISAVOW: *Suffer, Slave, Expire:* CS
Now dis is what I'm talking about! Puns aside, Disavow is members of Weak Teeth, Lyra, and Hurt Ensemble, playing d-beat—down-tuned, raw, and nihilistic—the way d-beat should sound. The eight tracks on this cassette offer just enough to get you ready to mosh, but leave you wanting more. –Paul J. Comeau (Squid Amps, checkyourselfpresents@gmail.com)

D.O.A.: *Fucked Up Donald:* 7"
A raging slab of prime D.O.A. The title track is a rewrite of the song that originally called out Ronald Reagan (*Rat Music for Rat People,* anyone?). The other two songs also churn along with blood and vinegar. Thanks should be given to Joe Keithley's newest recruits—Paddy Duddy and Mike Corkscrew Maggot for keeping everything moving. The cover alone is worth the price of admission to get your hands on this one. –Sean Koepenick (Sudden Death)

DOREEN: *Violence of the Spirit:* CS
This tape started off with a lot of nostalgia for the hip alt radio stations of the early 2000s: The Strokes, Bloc Party, all that dancey indie rock stuff I nearly forgot I kinda liked. But then it went and spun off into the ambient swell of "Crosstalk" and the slow-burn freakout (á la Sonic Youth) of "Punk!" and things were never the same after that. The next couple songs are jagged post-punk jams with drawling vocals and jarring guitar jams, and then we arrive at the title track, which includes whispering, muttering, and a smooth, disarming riff that repeats over and over until it explodes into a dissonant stutter. Comes with a zine-format lyric booklet and a creepy illustrated postcard to match the creepy illustrated tape cover. Neat and unexpected, overall. –Indiana Laub (Self-released, jjoshua.carsonn@gmail.com)

DOWNTOWN BOYS: Self-titled: LP
They've been getting quite the buzz recently, so I imagine it was inevitable that we'd see a vinyl repress of their debut. The good: the performances here are spirited, the bilingual English/Spanish lyrics are politically astute without getting preachy, and the inclusion of a sax player in their ranks is awesome. The bad: largely the production quality, which zaps a lot of energy from the proceedings. Despite that, it shines through clearly that they're having a ball making their brand of racket, as does the feeling that they're probably a hoot live. –Jimmy Alvarado (One Percent Press)

D.R.I.: *But Wait….There's More!:* 7" EP
Truth be told, I haven't paid much attention to these cats since a wee bit after they dropped *Dealing with It*, which was, Jesus, thirty-one years ago. Was never all that much into metal—and even less so punk's "crossover" period—so as the Dirty Rotten Imbeciles slowed their tempos, stretched out the song lengths, and lengthened their hair, I was off looking for more interesting things with which to bludgeon my ears. Seeing two old tunes here—and (correctly) guessing they were newer incarnations—piqued my interest enough to pick this up outta the piles, and I admit I was also curious as to where they were these days. The tempos here are still slower than the days of "Makes No Sense" and "Misery Loves Company," but there's also a bit less metal in the mix than their later stuff was drenched in; definitely a blessing. Of the five songs here, the reworkings of "Madman" and "Couch Slouch" are the strongest, though they pale next to the originals. The remaining three are mid-gear thrashers that aren't terrible but don't really stand out in an underground that is rife with bands peddling much more crucial wares. The O.G. fan in me really wants to like this, but in the end I just come out feeling… unimpressed. –Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

DRUNK NUNS, THE: *…And Friends:* CD
Sometimes I can't tell if a band is being sarcastic. Case in point, The Drunk Nuns have a song called "Gotta Believe Me" that starts with the line, "I'm drinking all the beers tonight. I'll smash your fucking face in tonight," and I can't tell for sure if they are really trying to do tough talk or they're making fun of drunks who do tough talk. I want to believe that they are jokers, especially considering the title of the record and the fact that all of the songs are "featuring" somebody, like the owner of the record label. On the other hand, they do a kind of whiney melodic punk thing that sounds pretty sincere at times. Unfortunately, it's all kind of forgettable. –MP Johnson (Ocelot)

DUCK & COVER: *Stuck in Decline:* CDEP
Second release from this full-tilt Boston outfit. Showing no signs of easing up, this mini-album is chock full of spiky guitars, hammering drums, and super-catchy vocals. All the songs are fantastic, but the one-two punch of "Wasted" followed by "Sheriff of Broken Jaw" really kicks down the doors. Top notch, gentlemen. –Sean Koepenick (Susspool, duckandcoverboston@gmail.com)

EDTANG AND THE CHOPS: *Magic Tricks and Rolling Stone:* CD
EdTang And The Chops play a mixed bag of alt-country, '50s-inspired rock'n'roll, and acoustic barroom folk anthems; all with a definite punk rock swagger that recalls elements of Against Me! and Sixer. EdTang has a strong, gravelly vocal delivery reminiscent of Tim Barry, a knack for storytelling, and a band that knows when to rock and when to chill. *Magic Tricks and Rolling Stone* is a solid Saturday night/Sunday afternoon record, definitely worth checking out. –Chad Williams (EdTang Music, edtangmusic.com)

EMPTY HEADS: *Ugly:* 7"
Anthemic pseudo-emo, somewhere between the '90s output of Dischord Records and the Latterman family of bands. It's a pretty good introductory single to this band. In three songs you're introduced to their interwoven vocal lines and Dinosaur Jr.-style mumble-choruses. Based on the recording, I couldn't tell you how many members in the band, which I find interesting. The guitar sound

is produced in such a way that it becomes muddled and thick. There's a slight shoegaze (shoeglaze?) to their music that adds to the lazy, depressed vibe of the release. Recommended. –Bryan Static (Debt Offensive, debtoffensiverecs.bigcartel.com)

ERIN TOBEY: *Middlemaze:* LP
The title of the record brought to mind the Buddha's Middle Path, and I thought that the record might be a concept record of sorts. Once I started listening to the record, I thought the title might be a reference to something more concrete, namely the sound on the record. That is, Erin Tobey traverses ground that middles between indie pop and Americana—a maze through the middle of the two, if you will. Some songs, however, fall firmly in one camp or the other, such as the indie pop opener to the backside, "Work It Out." While the song was enjoyable on its own, it felt disjointed given the more Americana tracks flanking it. That track was the most memorable misplaced piece of music on the record, but others also seem ill fitting. There were some tracks that definitely caught my attention, such as "Leaf Pile," which fell on the indie side of the tracks, and "Flotsam in the Wake" (which followed "Work It Out"). Unfortunately, I felt like I was waiting for the album to really take off at too many points, so the album seemed to lose momentum quite often. Pretty hit or miss, with some soft hits. –Vincent (Let's Pretend)

ETHICIST: *II:* LP
Barrett-era Pink Floyd discovers black metal. It's, of course, overly serious, big, and wildly overblown with saga-length tunes, and yet somehow it works. –Jimmy Alvarado (Phratry)

EXECUTIVES: Self-titled: 7" EP
If the Adolescents never had Rikk Agnew in the band and had maybe just slightly above a first-Red-Cross-EP level of chops and desperately attempted to sound like the first Generation X album, I think you'd get this. Am I close? This is a fairly underwhelming-sounding recording, quality-wise, for a Southern California band, even of that era, but three out of the four songs are pretty cool and the band likely deserved a moderately-better-appointed platform whence to articulate their vision. Then again, fuck any band where a guy is wearing an Izod® LaCoste gator shirt on the back cover. BEST SONG: Ironically, "Fashion." BEST SONG TITLE: "Jet Set." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Seriously. Fuck that gator shirt business. –Rev. Nørb (Rerun, rerunrecordsstl.com)

EXTERNAL MENACE: *The Process of Elimination:* LP
Glasgow's External Menace formed in 1979, but was largely forgotten until they reformed at the peak of the 1990s fashion punk revival. At that time, their early material was reissued, along with new recordings. Originally released in the late 1990s on CD in France and on vinyl in Germany, *The Process of Elimination* LP is finally getting the stateside edition it deserves. Very much in line with the global punk resurgence of its time, *The Process of Elimination* sounds like a lot of other spikey records from its era, but with a slightly older, learned bent. External Menace isn't one of those bands only interesting from a historical perspective. They're as vital as better-known counterparts, even if they seemingly slipped through the cracks. Hopefully this third wave of interest will finally make them the punk household name they ought to be. –Art Ettinger (Loud Punk, loudpunk.com)

EXTROVERTS: *Supple:* CD
This could be the great Canadian redemption story that we all pass down to our grandchildren on cold winter nights. Extroverts were one of (if not the) first punk rock bands in Regina, Saskatchewan back in 1979. Within the course of a few years, they would eke out a 7", play some shows, and disappear into the prairie snowdrifts of time (and into the dreams of very specific types of record collectors). Fast forward some thirty-seven years later. The guys are still around Regina and decide to get together to open for the ever-retiring DOA. They have a blast and decide to start jamming regularly. Singer Brent Caron discovers a lyric book from the old days that they never got around to using. The boys write songs around those vintage words, and here we are. If the story alone isn't amazing enough, the resulting album kicks all kinds of ass! It's snotty punk rock of the highest order. These guys somehow influenced the likes of The Briefs and Duane Peters without even existing for more than a nanosecond! I suggest you track them down and witness firsthand as these old punks take their rightful place along with the rest of our maple-stained punk legends. –Ty Stranglehold (Self-released, theextroverts.com)

FATHERS DAY: *That's It!:* CS
Cassettes winning this rotation! Fathers Day bring aggro Midwest oddball punk to your earholes and my Mclusky-starved diet. Funky noiseniks rejoice and bop and bounce to the Fathers Day AmRep/Gang Of Four groove. Thematically surrounding your angry dad without drowning in schtick, *That's It!* grabs you by the shoulders and shakes you to let you know that you *will* respect their authority. Get this now. –Matt Seward (Related, relatedrecords.bandcamp.com)

FLAT WORMS: *Red Hot Sands:* 7" EP
Starts off with a wall of feedback, so ye expect things are gonna go down the Flipper path. Then the drums kick in, then howling guitars, and you find yourself trapped in a web of driving rhythms, catchy guitar hooks, largely spoken vocals, and three tunes that have an oddly "pop" sensibility despite all the above. The opener, "Red Hot Sands," is white hot, and its two

compatriots here are not far behind it. Fuck yeah, this does the trick. –Jimmy Alvarado (Volar, volarrecords.com)

FLEAS, THE: *Heart Breaker:* 7"
This debut release from The Fleas has as much fizz in it as a bottle of soda which has been shaken furiously before being opened, resulting in the inevitable frothy explosion. The five tracks have a youthful exuberance aided by a production which retains the rough edges and adds to the prevailing energy. It's refreshing to hear records like this and it harkens back to days when all that really mattered was getting the tracks down on tape with minimal post-recording fiddling. Emily Condon delivers a masterclass in snotty vocals, spewing out caustic lyrics whilst sounding like she is having just the best time ever. More, please. –Rich Cocksedge (Grow Your Own, anthraxuk.bandcamp.com)

FOX FACE: *Teen Wiccan:* 7"
As the four teenagers exit the city bus, the driver calls after them, "You girls watch out for those weirdos." Their ostensible leader—Nancy Downs, clad in all black—turns and lowers her red sunglasses. "We *are* the weirdos, mister," she replies, holding the driver's gaze with a serpentine smile as the doors close. This moment from the 1996 film, *The Craft*, reverberated through an entire generation of outcasts, reaffirming for them the connection between feminine power and witchcraft. Milwaukee quartet, Fox Face, exist in a similar realm: a musical coven who call the four corners of garage, punk, goth, and riot grrrl to conjure a creepy and brooding, yet youthful and defiant sound. With two EPs already under their cloaks, the band once again invoke the spirit of angst and power chords on their three-song single, *Teen Wiccan.* Side A opens with the title track—a merry binding of shouted incantations and crashing cymbals—followed by the faster, groovier "Boogie Man," which intersperses night-surf guitars with harbinger warnings of "Never go to sleep! Never count sheep!" Side B summons the foreboding, chuggy "Tar," a thoroughly entrancing goth-garage assault. The cult-y artwork enshrouding the single further strengthens Fox Face's dark frequency, as if an occult hand had designed it specifically to beckon fellow witchy weirdos to their circle. The single's download code is tacked to the back of an original fox-centric rendering of the Tarot "Moon," a sly nod to the dualities of vision and illusion, genius and madness, and guidance and trickery. Nancy Downs would be proud… –Kelley O'Death (Chop Haus, foxface.bandcamp.com)

FREAKS OF NATURE: *Songs for Savages:* CS
There are only so many ways to describe fuzzy, guitar-driven garage punk (especially in contrast with the seemingly inexhaustible desire of punks the world over to start more fuzzy, guitar-driven garage punk bands). That being said, if we're going to keep doing this, I'm down for more bands to do it how Freaks Of Nature do it. Opener "Wonder Why" is infectiously upbeat, setting the pace for what's to follow. It's '60s-styled garage rock under a layer of punk, like The Seeds with the tempo dialed up a notch or three, though one of the several vocalists keeps pushing it closer to Cramps territory. There's a great harmonica appearance somewhere in there, and the ever-present fuzz sounds like an authentic layer of this band's sound rather than a cover-up. Best of all, they seem to pull off dirty and scrappy without any of the hypermasculine rock posturing that so often plagues the leather-jacket crowd. This kind of rock'n'roll really doesn't work unless it's fun, but Freaks of Nature can make it happen. –Indiana Laub (Related, relatedrecords.com)

FROZEN TEENS: Self-titled: CS
A cassette pressing of the first Frozen Teens album from 2012. People went bananas for this band, didn't they? I can tell there's a lot to like here—"Look at Your Hands" is a languid, coiling mofo, almost post-punky in its slow, deceptive catchiness, for one—but the majority of the hooks seem a little *too* buried to me. A more subdued Future Virgins, maybe? Regardless—and I'm not trying to be a contrarian here—it comes across as some solid, nicely inventive garage punk that still manages to fall a bit flat on these ears. –Keith Rosson (Dead Broke)

FUCKEMOS, THE: *Lifestyles of the Drugged and Homeless:* LP
When you got a guy wearing bikini briefs, sunglasses, and a cowboy hat on the cover of your record, you have "fuck" in your name, and you state that you represent the drugged and homeless, you've set the bar high for your sound. The pics of the band on the back made it look like they were wasting themselves because they knew they were stuck in a time warp of a town that nobody ever left. I didn't think they were gonna pull it off. The record started out with some driving punk, and then the vocals hit, which sounded like a frogman singing for a goth band at first—it took me a minute to realize it was an effect. The music stayed good, and the vocals stayed questionable. They were able to swing different moods and tempos while retaining a cohesive sound. As the record wore on, it got noisier, weirder, and better, but sounded a bit captive, like the record was falling short of their live performance. Around the time I flipped the record over, I decided to look 'em up. Turns out this is a reissue of a CD from '95. No wonder the guys on the cover looked like they were in a time warp. Anyhow, they pulled it off. They even have pretty stellar covers of Bauhaus and Sweet that both fit! Mine's on an opaque gold, if you're interested. –Vincent (Slope)

FUTURO: *Habitos Ruins:* 12" EP
Futuro are back with eight more songs that mix in hardcore punk with some

post hardcore. This sound reminds me of what was happening with the late '80s DC bands, and then up into the '90s with Jones Very (especially on the song "History"), when hardcore started to break off from the formula and explore sonic areas deemed off limits by the staunch and conservative fans. Futuro play the kind of music you can immerse yourself in and just listen to, such as the track "A Ultima Peça." The bass line in their cover of Violeta De Outono "Dia Eterno" sounds very similar to Government Issue's "Strange Wine". –Matt Average (Dirt Cult, dircultrecords@gmail.com)

FUZZLERS, THE: *Cyber:* CS
I appreciate the between-song continuing story of people entering a computer and finding a wizard… and there's a paper clip. I may have misunderstood the story, honestly. Fuzzlers are spazzy punks and thrashers, and I like them. I don't know if I want them to be more coherent or less coherent. I think I just like that people are still bringing Men's Recovery Project/Locust interest to the table. More, please. –Matt Werts (What's For Breakfast, wfbrecords.com)

GERBILS, THE: *Dead Detroit:* LP
Dead Detroit is a document of a band that recorded and never did anything with it. It's amazing things this good still exist. It's dead perfect for fans of snotty '82 hardcore punk before the speed completely set in. The album starts with mid-tempo aggression. "Phoney Baloney" and "No One Loves Me" has a great, unhinged drumbeat with that slappy, '80s snare sound. Side one gets into higher gear with a familiar sentiment: "I Don't Like Cops." This has all the elements of a band you should have heard of already. –Billups Allen (Lysergic Sound Distributors, lsdsounds.com)

GORILLA:
***Historia Dela Musica Rock:* CS**
Talk about an impossible band to Google. Either that lame band with a "Z" where an "S" should be comes up or you get actual gorillas. Score one for obscure punk. Gorilla are a current four piece from Japan who have released one 7" and a recent seven-song cassette that is a scorcher for fans of Flaming Groovies, The Registrators later stuff, or Big Star. Way-solid harmonies and a ratchety, dry guitar sound drive the songs late into the night. –Billups Allen (Self-released)

GOSPEL TRUTH, THE:
***Jealous Fires:* LP**
This record is fucking great. Imagine a mix of '80s Australian swampy swagger and driving '90s noise rock and you might get somewhere in the ballpark of what this record sounds like to me. The rhythm section really drives that underlying noise rock influence home with a full and really *loud* drum sound doling out the non-typical beats paired with sometimes spastic bass lines. But the Australian post-punk influence is really what's front and center here, as the guitar and vocals really pair well to capture not only just a sound, but also a feeling. Recommended. –Mark Twistworthy (12XU, 12xu.net)

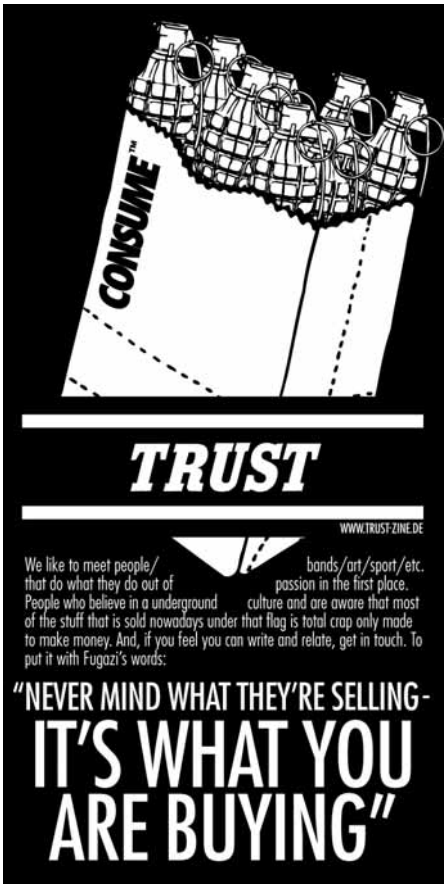
GRAND HEAD: Self-titled: LP
How did this get sent to *Razorcake*? This is a metal record. That being said, it's a pretty good metal record. At times, it sounds like a metal Minutemen and that's pretty neat. Other times, it sounds like a mix of latter day Black Flag and Paint It Black at their most vicious. It's got a good mix of sounds and interests that keep that record intriguing for the entirety of its run time. It is most definitely a heavy record, so if you go into it knowing that, you should have a good time. –Bryan Static (Gorbie, barrybrusseau.com/gorbie_records_store)

GUITAR GANGSTERS: *Prohibition:* LP
Proper re-issue of their debut 1989 full-length. Guitar Gangsters exist at the intersection of power pop and street punk. It has an undeniable edge to it, but you're hard pressed to find any mention of running riots, beer brawls, or the terraces. It's Buzzcockian pop made by guys who were stoked to "get the chance to release anything that featured guitars in the mix… in the post punk musical wasteland that was the late 1980s," as the updated insert states. Nothing really hits me as hard as their 2002 track "Safety Pin through My Heart" did, but it's still an absolute pleasure to finally hear where it all started. –Daryl (Wanda, info@wandarecords.de)

GUITAR WOLF: *T-Rex from a Tiny Space Yojouhan:* LP
One thing you can count on in this crazy world is you always know what you're getting when you buy a Guitar Wolf album. The band's signature airplane engine guitar sound and rock and roll song structures are in full effect on their latest album in the same way you used to be able to count on The Ramones. "Amoeba Love Song" is a real head nodder for those who are inhibited by not being able to understand lyrics. Vocals never bother me on a Guitar Wolf album, but it's nice once in a while to be able to attach to something. But the band doesn't seem to ever slow down. It's a must-have unless you know yourself not to like Guitar Wolf. Then it's less essential. –Billups Allen (Guitar Wolf, guitarwolf.net)

HARD LEFT: *Economy:* 7" EP
Almost like two different records here, the A-side has two stabs of anthemic street punk stompers with a leftist bent to the lyrics. The flip has the band jamming while poet Tom Wells recites a snippet from one of his books on the first track and D.H. Lawrence's "The Oxford Voice" on the second. Somehow it works. –Jimmy Alvarado (Future Perfect, futureperfectrecords.com)

HEMORAGE: *Pariah:* CD + Comic
An album with a comic book as liner notes. This review shall come in two chapters. *Chapter 1:* The comic is functional, but amusing enough. The art



is drawn nice and big (even if it seems to lose a little fidelity on the close-up). Despite the main character looking like a half-baked Magneto rip off, Captain Magnet appears to have no superpower at all. Nor does the comic actually reveal any purpose to him. He's a prisoner who escapes and beats people up; then someone ominously says that, "He's back…". What any of this means, or any reason we are supposed to care, is not expounded upon. *Chapter 2:* If the lyrics are supposed to illuminate the mysteries of Captain Magnet, they don't do a very good job. The record is a metalcore record, exactly—like you can hear it in your head when hearing the word "metalcore." Really, the standout features of the record are the atrociously unfunny skit segments which feature vomiting. Sometimes the music is fast, sometimes it's slow. It had a lot of metal riffs you've heard before. Really, I'd rather be listening to almost anything else right now. I have no idea if this would appeal to somebody who has a higher tolerance for metalcore. I find it pretty unlistenable, though. –Bryan Static (Savage People, savagepeople.net)

HORSE & RIDER: *Call a Priest:* LP
This four-piece from Duluth, Minn. is more than melodic punk. They're a group with raspy guitars that have more grit and teeth than the vocalists. Seems a little strange for a description of a record that also has an F.Y.P cover on it. *Call a Priest* twists and turns throughout the record. I'm much more into the despondent songs with huge build ups that kick off the album, though the fast and brutal hardcore, plus the poppier tracks standout as well. It especially helps that the last song includes hand claps. It's almost as if this band decided to write a mix tape record where they wear their individual influences on each track. There's some Leatherface in "Running in Circles," a bit of Crusades in "Last Straw," and a carbon copy of The Arrivals in "Asshole Dads." Rarely do you hear this kind of variety in just eleven songs, and for these guys it works really well. For you vinyl nerds, the record is limited to 150 hand screened and numbered sleeves that house a wide variety of colors for the wax. –Kayla Greet (Self-released)

I MANIACI: *"Clone My Cock" b/w "Snoopy Is a Paedophile:7"*
Packaging may lead the casual observer to assume this is some inherently avoidable artsy squawking and bleating. *The packaging is an ass!* "Clone My Cock" is a whirlwind, snotty, garage punk rager, whilst "Snoopy is a Paedophile" is merely rapid, with guitar leady bits! Science, clone this gentleman's cock with reckless abandon if it leads to more records like this! B-side is smooth and shiny, because getting up to flip the record over is such a pain. BEST SONG: "Clone My Cock." BEST SONG TITLE: "Snoopy is a Paedophile." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Band is named after an Italian movie from the 1960s, the title of which means "The Maniacs." –Rev. Nørb (Loud Punk)

IMPACT: *Worlds Apart:7"* EP
East Coast hardcore—a bit "crew," hints of metal in spots, and angry lyrics focusing more on the personal than the woes of the world at large. Heavy mid-'80s feel throughout the proceedings. –Jimmy Alvarado (Not Like You)

JAMES ARTHUR'S MANHUNT: *Digital Clubbing:* LP
I feel like I write this in many of my reviews, but Manhunt is a band that really needs to be experienced live. Sure, the recorded songs are fierce, bad times vibes all the way (but in a good way,) but live is where you really feel their power. Each time I've seen Manhunt live it seems like the band is on the verge of exploding on stage. There is so much anger—near violent rage at times—that I think the band will break into a gang fist fight before finishing the set. Maybe this is the "hate wave" fellow Texans Video talk about. *Digital Clubbing* is hot from the start, but side two takes things past the point of no return. "Wired" is a song you should put on a mix for your next long, boring drive where you need to stay awake so you can make it through Ohio alive. Or something like that. –Sal Lucci (12XU)

JAMES ARTHUR'S MANHUNT: *Digital Clubbing:* LP
Side one does nothing for me—a big, long introduction, a failed but decent '60s punk-plus-guitar-overload tune, a slower thing, and a noisy thing and that's the side. On side two, when the band cuts the shit and just lets it rip, they're actually pretty right-on... for three songs. Then another big long, noodly thing, and ball game. It's loud and intense, with occasional synth wiggles and tons of wah-wah lead guitar freakout sprouting up everywhere, but, on the whole, these guys were more disturbing my nap than waking me the fuck up. BEST SONG: "Wired." BEST SONG TITLE: This band has no good song titles, which is why you should not trust them. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Five-eighths of their song titles begin with the word "The." –Rev. Nørb (12XU, 12xu.net)

JAMES KOCHALKA SUPERSTAR: *Beautiful Man:* CS
James Kochalka is a legendary indie comics artist, best known for *American Elf*. Everyone from Daniel Clowes (*Eightball*, *Ghost World*) to *Razorcake*'s own Ben Snakepit cite him as an influence. Come to find out, Kochalka's also a damn fine rock musician. *Beautiful Man* features fourteen stick-in-your-head, home-recorded songs. Like Kochalka's comics, they're youthful and strange without crossing into twee whimsy. It's like kids' music for adults. The songs are super-simple, funny, thoughtful, and repetitive enough to sing along with on first listen, but short enough that they don't get old. It's really exciting to discover

another dimension to an artist that I already liked. –Chris Terry (Related, relatedrecords.storeenvy.com)

JAMES KOCHALKA: *Famey:* CS
Three sound collages made by influential indie comic artist James Kochalka (*American Elf*) in 1991. They consist of clips of music and pop ephemera, bounced off of each other and juxtapozed, likely edited with a boombox pause button. It makes for a jarring and distracting listen. Kochalka's made a ton of terrific art and music over the decades, and I highly suggest looking up his work, but this is not the place to start. –Chris Terry (Related, relatedrecords.storeenvy.com)

JAMIE KILSTEIN & THE AGENDA: *A Bit Much:* CD
If you've ever found yourself wishing that someone would mix rock'n'roll, comedy, and a comments section to create Reddit: The Musical, your wish has come true, woke white men of the web. Jamie Kilstein, spoken word artist and comedian, was given the push to put his outspoken rants to music after a DJ played behind him speaking at a fest. This really well produced album starts off with standout track "Fuck the NRA," which reminds me a bit of a Refused song. This song features Kilstein narrating what sounds like a gun control thread comment war between someone's gun-happy racist uncle, and a leftist who knows what is up. Other topics are covered in song titles such as, "Every Country Song Ever," "How to Not Be a Dick (To Women)," "Sad White Boy Blues," and "Catcall." There are some spoofy '90s-influenced indie rock songs that balance out the quick spoken word, and the album ends with mellow track "Maniac" that begs people to abolish boring, which the Reddit audience can use as advice to keep doing their thing. –Cynthia Pinedo (Don Giovanni, dongiovannirecords.com)

JANELLE: *Fault Lines:* LP
Grungy bass chords, washy synths, and '80s Euro-University vocals. If you had a college radio show twenty-five or thirty years ago, you were glad when you heard the DJ after you played bands like these when you tuned in on your drive back home, because you knew that was one less band up with which you needed to keep. Not sure if this is worse than Bratmobile's *The Real Janelle* EP, but "Janelle Janelle" by the Queers it sure ain't. BEST SONG: "Never." BEST SONG TITLE: "Slow Heart." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Ha! I plead the fifth. –Rev. Nørb (FDH, fdhmusic.com)

JILTED JOHN: *Jilted Jam:* CD
Jilted John's self-titled song is one of the classics of the early punk era, a blissfully dopey bit of naïve punk before "pathetique" got tacked on to similar stuff outta London by Gary Bushell a few years later. The single—and subsequent album—became a bit of a one-hit wonder in Britain. John went on to seek fame as a comedian and actor. Collected here are assorted recordings of practices, demos, and live gigs of vintage and more recent origin. Sound quality, of course, varies, with the earliest stuff sounding roughest—the 1977 demo for "Jilted John" included here has him on guitar and "Gordon" playing percussion on a Monopoly box lid—and the 2008 live recordings being the cleanest. Dunno if I'd call this essential, per se, but if you're a fan, I'm sure you'll be quick to disagree. –Jimmy Alvarado (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

JOLTS, THE: *No Paradoxes:* LP
Fans of punk rock and roll, take note: Vancouver's Jolts need your attention ASAP. This shit is no joke. Being a band for well over ten years now, they somehow still aren't as known as they should be. Their craft is perfect: buzzsaw guitars and sickeningly tight drums, with the catchiest of choruses that are far from cliché (the usual problem with this subgenre). I've always been jealous of Vancouver, due to their ridiculously amazing studios and engineers at their fingertips. *No Paradoxes* is the second LP regarded by ex-DBS and well-known (with reason) Jesse Gander, who's recorded all the best White Lung, Tranzmitors and Pack A.D. records. It's literally fucked-up how good these records sound. Turbonegro and The Hellacopters would both be jealous of the production on the past two Jolts albums. Back to the band—if you're not familiar—their tunes are a healthy portion of über-slick Swedish rock (without as many guitar solos), crossed with the intensity and sharpness of the Spits. Hell, even Teenage Bottlerocket fans would love this. "Hazard Street" if probably my top track on the record. Seriously required listening. Don't forget their previous album on Sudden Death, *8%*, either. –Steve Adamyk (Teenage Rampage, teenagerampagerecords.com)

JON AND THE VONS: *Gratest Hits Vol. 1:* LP
Living legend Jon Von turns his attention from the souped-up '50s squall of the Four Slicks to straight-up '60s Farfizoid garage. As with most garage records, the most important component is an arrestingly cool cover, and said cover is handled quite admirably by the also-legendary Rockin' Jelly Bean. Musically, the band breaks the usual amount of new ground in the genre (zero percent) and maintains a 2:1 covers-to-originals ratio. I'd enjoy seeing that ratio flipped in the future, simply on account of Jon's vocals sounding so right-on on originals like "Won't Be No Next Time" or "Can't Get You out of My Bed," and a little less convincing on well-heard garage staples like The Shag's 1967 LSD conversation, "Stop and Listen." Then again, he knocks "In and Out" by Larry & the Blue Notes right the fuck out of the park with a cricket bat, so what do I know? Grate Scott!! BEST SONG: "Won't Be No Next Time." BEST SONG TITLE: "Can't Get You out of My Bed." FANTASTIC AMAZING

TRIVIA FACT: The Shag were from Wisconsin. –Rev. Nørb (Soundflat, soundflat-records.de)

KINGFACE: *Live at the 9:30 Club:* LP
Excellent-sounding live recording from this show in 1988. If you never got to see them live back in the day, this is the next best thing. Pounding drums, pummeling bass, and shredding guitar. Topped with vocals that are melodic and poetic at the same time. Three songs are previously unreleased. Liner notes by the band and Scott Crawford (*Salad Days* documentary). I don't know what else to tell you except that this totally freaking rocks and is meant to be played *loud*. In your basement so your neighbors don't get pissed. You can thank me later. –Sean Koepenick (Not Like You, notlikeyouzine@gmail.com)

KNIFE HITS: *Eris:* LP
I told myself I wasn't gonna alliterate, *buuuut*: Pummeling, precise, downright pretty at times. Powerviolence pitched against screamo. (Okay, I'm done.) Seriously solid stuff that avoids at least one major pitfall by not having the gruff Cookie Monster dude come in and bark all over what really is some pretty amazing music. Converge seems like a solid jumping-off point. Wire-tight, unrelenting, brutal. The lyrics to me are a little silly. (Sorry, I just have a hard time taking seriously any band who sings in Latin and talks about "monoliths" and "ripped flesh" and "our cosmic mother," but it's not like you can understand what they're saying anyway.) If potential D & D flashbacks don't bug you, these guys are more than solid. –Keith Rosson (Dead Tank)

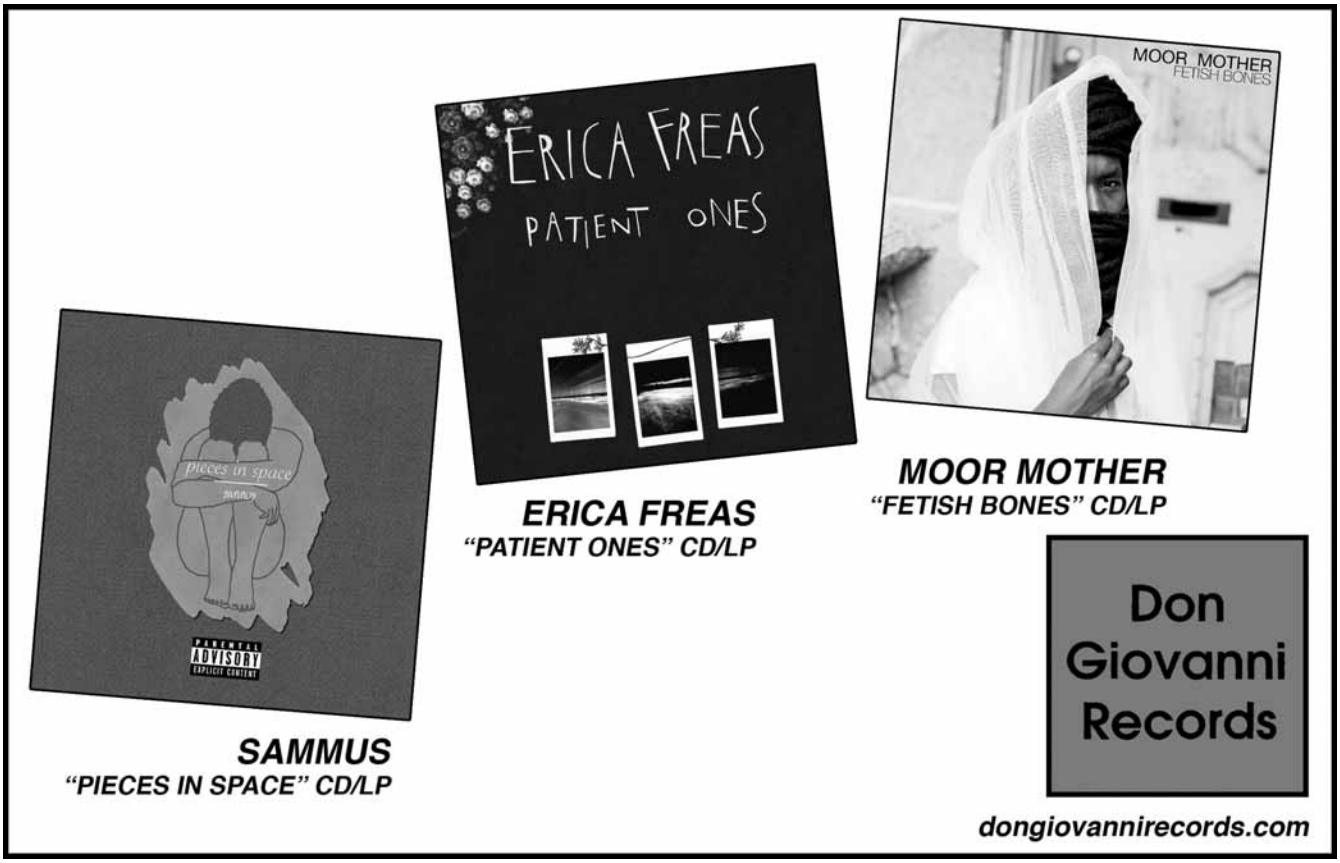
LOWDOWNS, THE: *This 10¢ Life:* CD
Pick your favorite punk rock'n'roll heroes and put them in a meat grinder—Johnny Thunders, Stiv Bators, Duane Peters, et cetera. The sausage that comes out the other end might be something like the Lowdowns. The problem is that the product is not the equivalent of the parts you put in the machine. It feels processed. In the end, it's just a hot dog. The Lowdowns are a very formulaic attempt at capturing that rock and roll spirit of 1977. Unfortunately, it just doesn't add anything to the story. –Jon Mule (Die Laughing, dielaughingrecords.com)

LOWER CLASS BRATS: *Primary Reinforcement Plus:* LP
A collection of the first six Lower Class Brats 7"s, dating from 1995-1999, *Primary Reinforcement Plus* presents some of their finest material, sounding better than ever. With beautiful packaging meticulously emulating the soundtrack artwork for *A Clockwork Orange* and detailed pressing information / descriptions of the original 7" releases included on the insert, this LP is clearly a labor of love. One of the few great streetpunk bands of the 1990s that is still around, Austin's Lower Class Brats serves as a proud reminder that there's no need to outgrow the subgenre. –Art Ettinger (Loud Punk, loudpunk.com)

LSDOGS: *Creeps:* 7" single
LSDogs is a super group made up of people from Sick Thoughts, Black Abba, Vatican Dagger, and Buck Biloxi And The Fucks cranking out the kind of punk that I absolutely love: dirty-as-hell guitar sound, and a shitty, bratty attitude in living color. No fancy virtuoso shenanigans; this is just about getting down and wrecking shit left and right. "Creeps" is a moderately quick tune that moves at a constant pace, and it's a killer. But it's "Yr Done" that really cooks. Mid tempo swagger and burn; the sonic equivalent of driving your thumb into someone's temple. Unpleasant for them, but fun for you. This so f'n great I had to put aside my free jazz and prog records for an evening and listen to just this record over and over. I wants more! I wants more! –Matt Average (Total Punk, floridasdyingrecords.com)

LUNACY: *Resurgence of Compulsion:* CS
This is the music our android successors will make in memory of us centuries after they have served us into extinction. Dark, synthy, ambient music, industrial in a way that suggests an actual dilapidated factory on the outskirts of a former metropolis. The occasional vocal melody, if you can call it that, creeps in under the clanking and droning every so often. Cool aesthetic, but what do people actually do while they listen to ambient music? Probably slowly replace their own body parts with cyborg technology and wait for the singularity, that's my guess based on this. The B-side is the A-side but reversed because of course it is. –Indiana Laub (Time Castle, timecastle.bandcamp.com)

LUTHERAN HEAT: *Shoot into the Sun:* 7"
Minneapolis dusty soul and girl group devotees, Lutheran Heat, bring the shiny happy on their two-song single, *Shoot into the Sun.* This 7" dropped way back in October of 2015, and the band have since released a full-length entitled *Louder from the Other Side* that further polishes and perfects their power pop chops. However, the shimmering core of their sound was already evident on these two fun, dreamy tracks, making them a worthwhile get. A side, "Shoot into the Sun," features their signature dual male and female vocals, hook-happy doo-wop reverence, and lyrics that further assert Lutheran Heat's bright, cheery personality. B side, "Hangin' Around," is just as bouncy and exuberant as its predecessor, but adds enough garage dirt into the mix to assure that its persistent sunniness and almost-too-adorable Everly Brothers nod read as charming, not cloying. Destined to be singalong gems, these two songs establish a band that doesn't take itself too seriously, to great effect. –Kelley O'Death (Damn Dirty, lutheranheat.bandcamp.com)



M.O.T.O.: *Motoerectus:* LP
M.O.T.O. have released so much top-notch no-budget tuneage over the last thirty-five years that they make Wesley Willis look like Duke Nukem by comparison. I don't think nature really intended for there to be a middle ground between Guided By Voices and Sloppy Seconds, but, by damn, this dude went and invented one anyway. Crunchy, catchy, off-the-wall shit—if there's ever a wax museum dedicated to pointless genius, Paul Caporino is a first-ballot inductee. Anyway. This album is a reissue of a 1987 cassette, and, as is usually the case with M.O.T.O., every song is either a neo-classic or a momentarily arresting curiosity, as the case may be—sort of like a DQ Blizzard made with sex and pus and killing instead of Reese's Pieces®. The main drawback to this album is that the percussion is provided by a Mattel® Synsonics™ drum machine—one of the first drum machines on the market that was kinda affordable to the average schmoe (the fact that it was manufactured by toymaker Mattel® should tell you all you need to know about how it sounds—if not, just imagine an autistic android child snapping a balloon with a rubber band for a half hour)—ergo, the record comes off more like a songwriting demo than something by which to get aurally absorbed. Let's face it, if the Standells would have recorded "Man, Woman and Child" fifty years ago, we'd all own about twenty cover versions of it. Then again, this way you have fewer versions to buy. BEST SONG: "Man, Woman and Child." BEST SONG TITLE: "One Good Dose of Nyquil." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Yes, I owned a Mattel Synsonics drum machine in the '80s. –Rev. Nørb (Rerun, rerunrecordsstl.com)

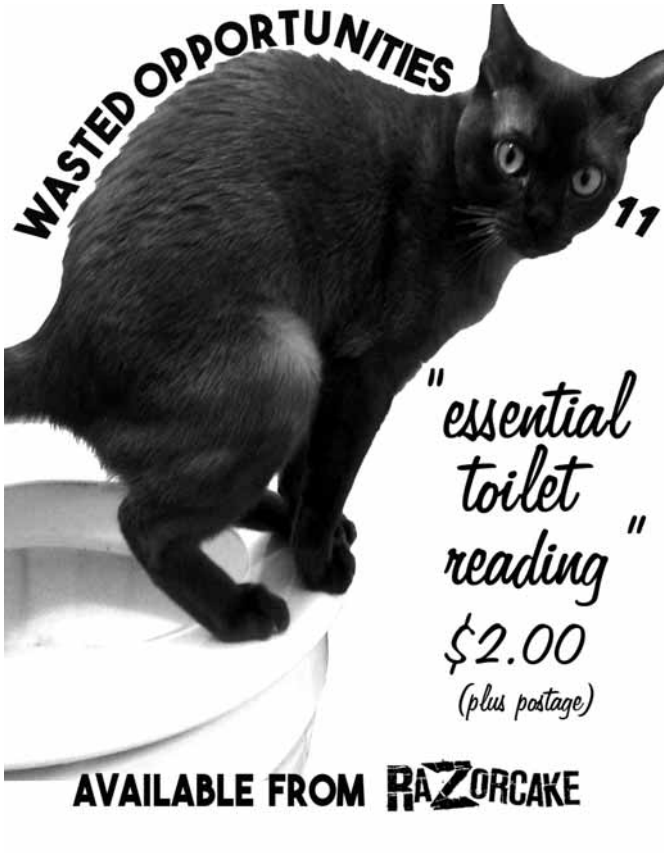
MEET YOUR DEATH: Self-titled: LP
Stompy, loud, southern rock put through the filter of lo-fi garage rock. Really not my speed. Personally, I find the trappings of the southern sound to be incredibly off-putting. There are a thousand things I'd rather be doing than listening to a fourth generation Jerry Lee Lewis lite. I can't say this is a bad record for what it is. The band knows how to restrain itself in the right way and the production matches their sensibilities pretty well. I just can't get behind the goals they're trying to achieve. Best of luck to them. –Bryan Static (12XU, 12xu.net)

MEET YOUR DEATH: Self-titled: LP
This is a blues band, and this is a blues record. This is *not* a "blues festival" band. You will not see these mofos down at the waterfront on a sunny day while you sip on a nine-dollar IPA and the Croc-wearing guy in front of you hoists his toddler on his back and blocks your view. This is crazed, menacing, straight-up bananas stuff, with a pedigree here that includes stints in bands such as the Gories, Jack O'Fire, the Oblivians. This shit is soulful, inherently damaged, dirty as hell. Searing guitar lines, dark graveyard stomps, wailing harmonica. It's seriously *so good*. I'm the furthest thing from a blues aficionado but I can tell when a band's going for the throat, and holy god these guys are not fucking around. You take your kid to a blues festival that Meet Your Death's playing, the little jerk's gonna walk out of there with devil horns and a stick knife in his pocket. Unrelenting, utterly convincing, highly recommended. –Keith Rosson (12XU)

MIKEY ERG: *Tentative Decisions:* CD
Call me clueless, but I had no idea that Mikey Erg was releasing solo records now. A lot of solo records from people who previously fronted bands have fallen flat for me (see, *e.g.*, Ben Weasel), while relatively few have found a permanent place in my collection (see, *e.g.*, Bob Mould). As such, my expectations weren't set terribly high. Mr. Erg's record, however, exceeded my expectations and then some (and maybe because others have lowered them, but that aside…). Had I been told that this was a new Ergs! record, my only thought would be, they've matured well. It's not a small amount of maturation, as was seen between *DorkRock* and *Upstairs*, but we aren't talking going from *Stink* to *Don't Tell a Soul*, either. Rather, it's more mature insofar as it has better instrumentation (and a wider assortment instruments, to boot) and better idea execution (which may be a result of the former). Definitely a really good solo record. Now Mikey Erg has me hoping he continues down the Mould Path (even if it means some not so great forays into the world of electronic dance), and brings the world another *Copper Blue*. –Vincent (Don Giovanni)

MILLIONES DE COLORES: *Piratas Resilientes Del Inframundo:* CD
Never thought it possible a band could remind me of emo, yacht jazz, and Fleetwood Mac all at the same time. These Peruvian post-hardcore kids prove I was errant in that belief. –Jimmy Alvarado (Anti Rudo, facebook.com/AntiRudoRecords)

MR. T EXPERIENCE: *King Dork Approximately:* LP
This is the first new record from MTX since *Yesterday's Rules*, twelve years ago. It comes to us as a companion piece for frontman "Doctor" Frank Portman's young adult novels of the same name—plus and minus the "Approximately" part. I'm still making my way through the first book, so this review won't be able to tell you how much the songs tie into the story. Considering that Doctor Frank has always been known for having some of the smartest lyrics in pop punk, I'm assuming these tracks are a nice complement to the books. "Gooey Glasses" is a standout track to me. It starts out with real gritty guitar tones, then transitions into a softer bridge like something the Flaming Lips might have written. Then it ends on a loop of the same raucous riff with



a strong lead over top of it. One of the tracks, "O'Brien is Tryin' to Learn to Talk Hawaiian" is a cover of a song from 1916 that Portman tackles on an acoustic guitar. There are songs that strongly relate to teenagers, such as "High School Is the Penalty for Transgressions Yet to Be Specified," with lyrics about how shitty high school can be, and how much of the same it is in adulthood. But then songs like "Thinking of Suicide?" are less dark than you might think, and fall in line more with upbeat tracks like "I Wanna Ramone You." It's a satisfying new MTX record for longtime fans, and even better for teenagers finding the band for the first time now. Whenever movie options happen for these books, MTX already has the soundtrack taken care of. –Kayla Greet (Sounds Rad, soundsradical.com)

MRS. MAGICIAN: *Bermuda:* LP
Mrs. Magician's second album for Swami (and third overall), *Bermuda,* is also their first record since 2012. While I can't speak to their back catalog, *Bermuda* is eleven songs and thirty-six minutes of power pop influenced by surf music and produced by John Reis. Highlights include "Reborn Boys" and "Jessica Slaughter." Interestingly, the lyrics aren't as happy and sugary as the music might suggest—there's a lot more about confusion and alienation in life as opposed to tunes about girls, sand, and sun, which is a welcome relief to where lyrics often go with this music. That being said, musically it's always been difficult for me to get into surf-influenced tunes, but I've gotta give Mrs. Magician some credit for being a band that put together a solid album doing something different, lyrically, than their genre might normally suggest. –Kurt Morris (Swami)

MUSK: *MUSK 2: The Second Skumming:* LP
Ain't nothing sophomoric about Musk's second LP *Musk 2: The Second Skumming.* "The Hidden Cost" sets the tone of some weird, spooky acid carnival bass riffs, then gets straight into the searing trash of "Wet Brain" and "Raw Night" with Rob's vocals a hot mess, just oozing with blissful sleaze. The full throb of "Or Your Life" gets blood spurting into a slow, knuckle-dragging "Hip Pain" and ends with a dirty rock'n'roll, Gun Club-feelin' "Weathervane." Side B has a serious drawl. Perhaps it's the lingering hip pain (true story). Still, Musk continues to claw its dirty nails through "Word Ain't Round" and "It's Square." Angular, fuzzed-out rock'n'roll riffs of "Catch & Release" will have you gleefully banging your head against the wall. It's straight-up raw Pussy Galore trash garage done right! Eat up. –Camylle Reynolds (12XU)

NATO COLES AND THE BLUE DIAMOND BAND: *Live at Grumpy's Bar & Grill:* CD
There are really only two kinds of people in the world: those lucky enough to have seen Nato Coles And The Blue Diamond Band live and those who have yet to experience the brilliance of this artist. The first word that came to my mind when I saw these guys at Awesome Fest 2014 was "cowpunk"—not as a label or a pigeonhole, but as a description of a sound that is hard-charging, honest, and gritty. Like a horseback ride through the L.A. river. This band draws on the legacy of bands like Jason And The Scorchers, The Blasters, and The Gun Club: country music for people who don't like ignorance and punk music for people who like a little twang. This live album captures a little bit of the power and the glory of a live show, but it's worthy of a place in your collection for those times when you can't get out to a show. —Lisa Weiss (Rum Bar, rumbarrecords.bandcamp.com)

NIGHT BIRDS: *Who Killed Mike Hunchback?:* 7"
The first time I saw Night Birds play was at Beerland in Austin, Texas. I had the self-titled 7" and was really excited to see them live. The guitarist walked on stage with scraggly, dark hair in his face. Curiously, he was wearing two foam knee braces and carried a chair to the stage. I deduced that he must have wrecked his knees somehow and had to sit to play. The band counted in and, before I knew what was happening, he was standing on the chair, then launched himself into the crowd and to the concrete floor on his knees, all the while playing insane surf guitar leads. The entire band kicked my ass all over that sweatbox and I was instantly a fan for life. Later on, we hauled ass over the Mohawk to catch their next set. The guitarist jumped again. This time it was about ten feet out and about five feet down to the concrete. On his knees, and he still didn't miss a note. This was my introduction to Mike Hunchback. Mike left the band not long after their first LP came out, and his large shoes were filled perfectly by PJ Russo, but this latest instalment in Fat's demo series is all about Mike. Raw versions of early songs with Mike handling vocals on a couple of them, which kind of come off with a *Cough/Cool* and *She* vibe (and perhaps inspired the Misfits tribute cover art?). This single is a welcome addition to my once again complete Night Birds catalog. –Ty Stranglehold (Fat)

NO CHOICE: Self-titled: 7" EP
A short collection of two previously released comp tracks and two previously unreleased tracks from this Italian hardcore unit active from 1992-2003. The tempos are thrashy and frenetic, hard without losing musicality, and have a U.S.-influenced universality to their approach that'll whet the appetites of a wide swath of punker tots. Good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (No Choice, nochoice.it)

NO STATIK: *Earhammer Soundsystem:* LP
I have to admit, this is my first time listening to No Statik, which might

greatly set expectations as to what they really sound like, because this is a re-mix (originally released on cassette by the band) of their *Everywhere You Aren't Looking* LP originally released on Prank. It's intense Bay Area hardcore that gets reworked with techno beats, noise blasts, interludes, and warped sounds (at one point the vocals are slowed, or something, and sound like an obscure black metal vocalist), and more. This makes for a more interesting listening experience than just putting on a hardcore record and letting it rip. Which is great to do, but it's good to throw a wrench in the works and upend your usual listening experience. You will be doing yourself a great disservice by ignoring this. –Matt Average (25 Diamonds, 25diamonds.com)

NONES: *XOXOXO Sue:* LP
I remember digging a single by them just fine, but that in no way prepared this schmuck for what's going on here. Chaotic, churning post-punk sludge is the order of the day on this full-length—part No Trend, part Nails (the "88 Lines about 44 Women" band, not the contemporary grindcore band), part Cows, and gloriously fucked. Not hearing the sax as much here, but with all the noisemaking going on, who has time to really miss it? This definitely hits the spot. –Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac)

PANSY DIVISION: *Quite Contrary:* CD
Quite Contrary is the latest release from the legendary San Francisco queer power pop quartet Pansy Division. Songs jump around between pop punk, rock, and power pop but also incorporate some cool X-ish cowpunk vibes. If you are going through a break up, maybe breaking up with a lover, with your youth, with electoral politics, or your old slutty ways, this record might be some great healing material for you, or at the very least give you something to scream and sing along with between crying and fits of rage. –Candace Hansen (Alternative Tentacles)

P.C.2: *Next Place:* LP
Hailing from a small countryside town in Japan, P.C.2 is a revived version of the band Pay Channel. Major kudos is in order to Secret Mission for providing a stateside LP from this outrageously energetic group. Taking classic 1977 sounds and mixing in 1990s garage and streetpunk influences, a unique, yet instantly catchy amalgamation emerges. There are seven originals and two covers (a Flamin' Groovies song and a Frantic Stuffs song), punctuated by a vocalist who sounds as though he's seen a straightjacket or two. Hopefully P.C.2 sticks around this time so that we don't have to wait another fifteen years for Pay Channel 3. –Art Ettinger (Secret Mission, secretmissionrecords.com)

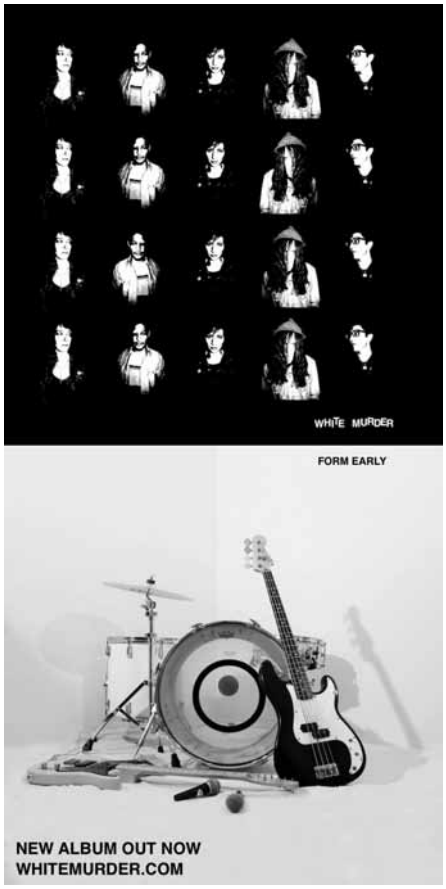
PETS: *Get Turned On:* LP
Fuzzy, feel-good psych pop. Like a lighter, fluffier Jesus And Mary Chain. Lots of mid-tempo hip shakers, it's almost ambient but with a solid beat. Allison and Derek take turns at the mic. Both have easy steadfast vocals that melt into with their buzzed-out sound like powdered sugar into cake batter. Pets has been around since 2003 and has recently been making the rounds with Dog Party and Kepi Ghoulie. Keep an eye out! –Camylle Reynolds (SAC, sacramaniacs.com)

PLASTIC IDOLS: *Einstein Experience:* 7"
In contrast to their 1979 single, which felt like slightly overproduced *Killed By Death* material, the A side of their 1980 follow-up sounds like an underproduced attempt at a legit college radio new wave hit (excluding the ever-popular noise generator, which is still wild as hell). The B side contains one fast punk number and one pointless track of artsy noodling. Ya can't say they didn't cover all their bases with this one. BEST SONG & TITLE: "Uncircumcised Twin." FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Originally released on Vision Records. Wait, I said that already. –Rev. Nørb (Rerun, rerunrecordsstl.com)

POTBELLY: *We're Still Swillers after All These Years:* 7"
I thought I hated this band, but this record is a ripper. It's fast, grimy hardcore buried deep under some perfectly shitty production. It's like they recorded in a garage on cassette in 1985 and then the cassette was bootlegged over and over by salivating punk nerds before being committed to vinyl sans remastering and put into my raging mitts. They almost manage to make the closing accordion jam sound old school. Almost. –MP Johnson (1332)

PRE NUP: Self-titled: 7"
Maybe if I were a Manic Pixie Dream Girl, I'd dig on this 7" harder. Loose, off-key, and twee as can be, Pre Nup whisks the listener away to a land where everything is made of gumdrops and bubblegum, and grammar Nazis rule. Kind of like when Vampire Weekend asked to no one in particular, "Who gives a fuck about an Oxford comma?" Pre Nup takes pride in their superior grasp of the English language. "Wrong Your" kicks off the self-titled EP with "Air Quotes" on deck, the latter of which features such memorable wisdom nuggets as "Communicate in code / I only talk in air quotes," "Irony is cheating," and "Swappin' words with wordplay." I wish that Pre Nup would either put their money where their mouth is and write the next great piece of American literature, or take some singing lessons and buy a metronome. –Simone Carter (Debt Offensive, debtoffensiverecs.bigcartel.com / Kingfisher Bluez, kingfisherbluez.com)

PREDATOR: *"Drag" b/w "First to Know": 7"*
Reminiscent of that era where any band playing shows with punk bands would automatically be labeled hardcore



punk. Predator is some sort of odd mix of early Adolescents, later East Coast hardcore that got a bit metal—and I'm pretty sure I heard them say Satan—so, for good measure, we'll include black metal as well. The A side and B side are radically different flavors. The first is a sloppy pop song and the second is a sludge punk jam. I think both sides are pretty good. I have no idea how the flavors of this single would taste on a full length. So, I guess it succeeds in that I feel obligated to check out more of these guys just to see how these coalesce. –Bryan Static (Total Punk, floridaisdying.com)

PRETTY FLOWERS, THE / LAST GOOD SLEEP: Split: 7"
I may be an outsider to indie rock, but I know what I like, and I love The Pretty Flowers. It's clean, but not sterile. Structured, but not confining. It's beautiful, heartfelt music that I can put my head down on my desk and listen to, and know that it will make me feel better. They are a true treasure of Los Angeles. Last Good Sleep offer up two tracks of rugged emo rock—half meandering through the grooves—but it all comes together as the needle approaches the runoff. –Daryl (Self-released)

PRETTY GREENS: *No Jerks Allowed:* CS
No Jerks Allowed is the latest six-song EP from Philly feminist garagey-punky-surfy trio Pretty Greens. This tape is full of melodic harmonies, thick rock drums, guitar that vacillates between downstrokey grit to that cool plasticy sound, and smart, poppy vocals. A mix of high energy, chunky rock, and dreamy indie make it welcomed listening for fans of bands like Leggy and Upset. Cover art is drenched in badass femme "I'm wearing a lot of lipstick but I'll still cut you" feels. Catchy, cool, and limited to one hundred! –Candace Hansen (Negative Fun)

PROBLEMS: *No Solutions:* LP
Bracing, furious hardcore from the Nordic wastelands. In your face, like Out Cold or DS13 but with a twist, not unlike Void. There are moments where the fury breaks down, but for the most parts its one hundred mph. This shit is ugly and mean and sounds like being thrown down a flight of concrete stairs. I'm old as fuck, but always have time some well-crafted, pissed-off hardcore. Boss. –Tim Brooks (Lillel Himmel)

PROFESSOR HUGH G. RECKSHUN: *"The Natives" b/w "Cannibal Stew": 7"*
In 2016, the world got two big-screen adaptations of Rudyard Kipling novels. Just three years ago, Eli Roth revived and updated the "brown cannibals eat white interlopers in the jungle" subgenre of exploitation cinema that was popular in the late '70s and early '80s. From Timothy Dalton's brooding colonial explorer on *Penny Dreadful* to the upcoming remake of *Jumanji*, there are already so many "woe the 'White Man's Burden'" and "watch the jungle terrorize innocent white children" stories to go around. If fiction isn't cutting it, one can even turn to the pseudoscientific racist rhetoric of the alt-right movement. "But it's just not enough," you might say, adjusting the small, porcelain phrenology head on your desk. "I need *more* stories about how natives are small-brained savages with silly customs, dumb-dumb languages, and a lusty hunger for white flesh!" You thoughtfully finger your framed photo of the Hottentot Venus, and continue, "What's more, I need those stories to be set to music! Grating fucking music! Music that sounds like a crusty folk punk drank too much Old Crow and magically *Pleasantville*d themselves back to the cultural and musical landscape of 1950s America, equipped with little more than a ukulele, a maraca, and a sound effect library full of monkey noises." Do not fret, intrepid flouter of the evil Thought Police! Professor Hugh G. Reckshun is here with a new single to satiate all of your "I'm not racist! Come on, it's just a joke!" desires. –Kelley O'Death (Greasy, greasy.storenvy.com)

PUFF: *Living in the Partyzone:* LP
I'm going to write some speculative fiction for you guys. Imagine in the far future, the Spits are as popular as the Beatles in the inevitable cyberpunk dystopian future. Now, in Germany, a band picks up their records along with some early Kraftwerk and decides to create a fusion of the two sounds. Less focused on sounding like alien robots on acid, but still distorted with a sound reminiscent of recording in a cave, Puff (stylized with one backwards F) does a pretty good impression of this sci-fi story I just made up. It's bizarre, it's synth-driven, and it's pretty catchy. Recommended if you like to get weird. –Bryan Static (Slovenly)

PURE DISGUST: Self-titled: LP
The vitriol on Pure Disgust's first LP couldn't be more justified. On "Slander Me," vocalist Rob belts, "When will brown bodies get the respect we deserve?" It's a question that demands an answer. You have to be living under a rock, inside a cave, or in another galaxy to be unaware of the unmitigated police violence in this country: Eric Garner, Terence Crutcher, Philando Castile, Michael Brown—all people of color killed by police. "They're not here to serve and protect / They serve the rich and protect the wealthy," Pure Disgust cry out on "Agents of the Machine." But their message is amplified by jaw-dropping, blood-boiling hardcore. The U.S. capital is where they call home, so it makes sense that they are a dead ringer for Washington, D.C.'s The Faith. Alongside G.L.O.S.S., Pure Disgust makes hardcore dangerous and purposeful again. –Sean Arenas (Katorga Works)

RAIN LIKE THE SOUND OF TRAINS: *Singles:* Mini LP
As the 1980s came to a close, bands starting up were sometimes swimming

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in uncharted waters. So when this collection of 7"s came out, I jumped to grab one since it featured members of bands I knew, like Soulside, Verbal Assault, and Beefeater. But there are some left turns here—like the Flea-style bass on "Bad Man's Grave." And the congas sound like a member of Santana's band was let into the studio. But, overall, these extras are kept to a minimum. It still has a cool groove with lyrics that lean towards the political. If you missed these songs when they came out from 1992-1995, now is the time to correct that error. Highly recommended. –Sean Koepenick (Atomic Action, atomicactionrecords@gmail.com)

RAT'S REST: *On the Eastside:* 7" EP
The gruff quality of the vocals quickly brings Leatherface to mind, a feeling reinforced by the combination of drive and melody in the music. The lack of Hüskeresque noodling and largely straightforward hammering of the dual guitars, however, indicate other influences are afoot and tempers any out-of-hand dismissals of them merely photocopying their heroes. Four tunes here, not a stinker in the bunch. All told, a solid release. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dead Broke)

RED TEETH: *Light Bender:* 7"
This is some serious nerd punk. I'm not talking about that "I watch *Game of Thrones* and enjoy craft beer" bullshit that passes for nerdery these days. I'm talking full-on writing songs in the basement surrounded by stacks of yellowing Michael Moorcock novels while your buds play Warhammer shirtless in the background. So get this, the title track is an epic tale of a battle between a light bender and a sound bender. It rides in on a fuzzy, stuttering concoction of beats and riffs that make you want to push your glasses up and squint at the lyric sheet. This record is definitely worth nerding out over. –MP Johnson (GTG, gtgrecords.bandcamp.com)

REGRET: Self-titled: 7"
Three tracks built upon a bedrock of d-beat, crust, and metal from a Bristol, U.K. band which continues that city's long-standing tradition of thunderous and powerful punk rock. This has a big, thick sound which rumbles and reverberates through my body when played loud. I'm also a sucker for covers featuring black and white pictures of birds, so this wins on all counts. –Rich Cocksedge (Pumpkin, pumpkinrecords.co.uk / Ruin Nation, info@ruinnation.org, ruination.org / Maloka, malokadistro.com / Never Fall Into Silence, neverfallintosilencerecords.bigcartel.com)

RIGHT HERE, THE: *Stick to the Plan:* CD
Inside of three seconds into the first tune, I am thinking, "This sounds like Slow Death." Take a quick look and see that they are from Minneapolis, so it is not surprising. This is some fantastic mid-tempo rockin' alt country type stuff with some anthemic punk in the mix. Sound and recording remind me quite a bit of the early Two Cow Garage stuff as well; high praise indeed. I would even say that there is kind of a rocked-up Tim Barry feel to a couple of the songs. I am always looking for more stuff that sounds like this and this hits the spot just fine. –Mike Frame (Rum Bar, umbarrecords.bandcamp.com)

RIK AND THE PIGS: *"Life's a Bust": 7"*
Dirty never sounded so good. Lewd'n'crude, Rik And The Pigs take your ears to the slum in *Life's a Bust*. Filthy guitars, squealing sax, and a thudding rhythm section slop around together in this proverbial garage punk mud bath. With a healthy dose of political dissonance in the lyrics, this 7" will make you want to embrace your inner slovenly slob, grow a beard, and quit your job. Highly recommended. –Simone Carter (Feel It, feelitrecordshop.com)

RIPCORD: *Poetic Justice:* 2 x LP/CD
One of a pair of timely reissues, both featuring a hefty number of bonus tracks from a band which, at the time of writing, is just two weeks away from its first gig in twenty years. (I was fortunate to secure a ticket for the event.) Such was the interest for that live return that the gig sold out in minutes, which gives an idea of how well Ripcord was, and still is, regarded. *Poetic Justice* is the band's second album and it's easy to hear the influence that American bands were having on the U.K. and Europe back in the latter half of the 1980s. A noticeable increase in the speed was something that Ripcord made great use of, becoming part of a new wave of bands pushing punk in a new direction. The result was that the slightly slower UK82 style was gradually usurped by the desire to play faster and shorter songs. Amongst the forty-five tracks is a recording of a live show, which has increased my anticipation levels for the upcoming reunion show. –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage)

SCUZZ: *Songs of the Sordid:* LP
The name ain't a lie. Scuzz play a nasty, chuggable cocktail of fastcore and crust with a twist of d-beat. You can practically taste the musty basement and spilled Black Label. Lots of drawings of bongs and chill aliens on the cover/lyric sheet. It's fucking awesome. Thirteen songs in eighteen minutes from these Albany beasts. –Chris Terry (Loud Punk)

SEGA GENOCIDES: *Trys:* LP
They say they're killwave, but it's more like chillwave. Sega Genocides seem to pull from the Vaselines, Pixies, Modest Mouse, and Dinosaur Jr. and add a modern twist. The whole LP is chill, optimistic punk for '90s lovers. –Camylle Reynolds (Just Because)

SEX HOGS II: *Part One:* CS
I was worried about problematic and/or unfunny throwback '70s horndog

rock, or just *too much crotch*, but Sex Hogs II are very tender rock'n'rollers. There is still crotch here. There's also slapback echo on the vocals and saxophone and riffs. You can put your arm around your baby to this, or sweat to this, or stay home with a milkshake to this. Nothing as weird and wild as Jon Spencer or The Cramps, but this is fine. –Matt Werts (Diaper Cake, sexhogs.bandcamp.com)

SEX POWERS: *Dive Bombs:* 7" EP
Was curious to learn a little more about the band, so I looked 'em up and this is one of those times when the descriptions don't come near to matching what I'm hearing. Online descriptions tag 'em as some sorta second coming of d-beat, but what's coming outta my speakers is more akin to the artier fringes of early '80s L.A. more along the lines of, say, Modern Warfare than Dr. Know. Go figure. –Jimmy Alvarado (Not Like You)

SHITBOX JIMMY: *The Movie:* LP
This is a nice surprise! Shitbox Jimmy is a rock'n'roll band that sits on the poppy end of the garage rock spectrum, sometimes sounding like a super catchy version of The Dirty Snakes. It's definitely garage rock, but unlike most garage rock records coming out these days, this thing has hooks galore. It's the kind of garage rock that sits more on the jangly side than the skuzzy side, but it still has enough bite to grab your attention when listening. Totally into it. –Mark Twistworthy (Just Because, justbecauserecs.tumblr.com)

SICK THOUGHTS: *"18 and Free" b/w "Choose Death":* 7"
"Choose Death" should have been the A-side here. It has the sickest Sick Thoughts riff. The guitar tone and recording itself belies this is a record from 2016. This song will be on whatever *Killed By Death*-esque comp in, I don't know, fifteen years or so, whenever the world gets around to comping the twenty-tens (*Killed By The Cassette Tape Revival*?) "18 and Free" is no slouch of a tune—see, it's a real Sick Thoughts anthem—but "Choose Death" smothers its flip side like you would an annoying relative who is threatening to write you out of their will. There are a lot of Sick Thoughts records out there, too many probably, so choose this total punker if you're not sure where to start or go next. –Sal Lucci (Total Punk)

SIDE EYES / REDD KROSS: Split: 7"
Here's a fun little record for any Go-Go's fans or fans of early L.A. '80s punk. Each band does a Go-Go's cover. The Side Eyes are a new southern California punk band fronted by a daughter of one of the Go-Go's and one of the guys from Red Kross, so this whole record ties itself together nicely. A great idea for a split. Honestly, both cover songs are done really well. –Ryan Nichols (In The Red, info@intheredrecords.com)

SLEEPING BEAUTIES: Self-titled: CD
Some sonic rambunctiousness coming out of the Pacific Northwest. At times they sound like the Electric Eels re-envisioning the Velvet Underground, at others you can hear echoes of the Cramps' lysergic side coming to the fore, all delivered with enough crash-bang to make the walls rattle. –Jimmy Alvarado (In The Red)

SNEEZE ATTACK: *Maxwell:* LP
Did you ever wish the Ramones had recorded a raw, garage rock record with a punk rock woman singing catchy pop songs? If you didn't, you should have. Sneeze Attack has recorded just such a record and once you listen, you can't help but flip the record back over and listen again. Recommended if you like: guitars, melodies, backbeats, and fun. –Chad Williams (Pleasant Screams, pleasant-screams.com)

SNUBS, THE: Self-titled: LP
Boring shit that's supposed to be funny. Lyrics tend to be self-deprecating, but only if from the viewpoint of whomever they're taunting. Music is pretty remedial punk. In other words, uncreative and (thankfully) forgettable. Band name is kinda decent, though, which is good, because it makes it easier to remember to avoid them live—or, you know, snub them. –Vincent (Moodkiller)

SO COW: *Lisa Marie Airplane Tour:* LP
This is an album I probably would have never picked up myself but it really grew on me. The first couple of tracks are engaging enough but the album really picks up with "Captain of Industry" where Brian Kelly proves he is a master of making repetition feel dynamic. That sonic thread continues right into track four, "Westerly Direction," which chugs right along with the lo-fi folk punk pop sound but lets things get momentarily and unexpectedly (but pleasantly) off-kilter before an abrupt end. Jumping ahead, track eleven, "Wait It Out," is one of my favorites with its uplifting yet apathetic message soaked in an upbeat garage sound. I'm looking forward to checking out more So Cow. –Nicole X (Jigsaw, jigsaw-records.com)

SOFT CANDY: *Bixarre Luv Pyramids:* 7"
Title song is a nice bit of dreamy, Beatlesque pop that would've easily found a home on Creation Records' roster. Flip, "Song for Ellie May," sounds like a Small Faces outtake circa "Itchykoo Park." Diggin' it, man. –Jimmy Alvarado (HoZac, hozacrecords.com)

SPACE ALIEN DONALD: *Must Be Funny:* CS
If I gave my grandfather a Moog synthesizer and a collection of the last thirty years of hip hop's greatest hits for his eightieth birthday, Space Alien Donald is what I would imagine his resulting mixtape would sound like. The stage name of Donald Thomas Roth, Space Alien Donald began

rapping at the age of seventy-four after retiring from a career in, as he puts it, "electronics." He sums up his lyrical themes in the liner notes "…space aliens will be friends…computers and robots can have emotions… that old people can think young… being silly is okay." That's a sentiment I can get behind. –Paul J. Comeau (Related, relatedrecords.com)

STEVE ADAMYK BAND: *Graceland:* LP
This is the first time I've heard the Steve Adamyk Band, even though the prolific songwriter has previously released four LPs and a handful of 7"s since 2010. Where he finds the time, I have no idea. Hailing from Ottawa, this fuzzy power pop outfit also touts members of Sonic Avenues, while Colleen Green and Mike Krol lend their voices to a smattering of songs. The choruses are well-studied, as if written under the tutelage of pop punk professors. They are simply so refined that you question their originality: "This has to be a cover, right? It's too good! How can this *not* be a cover?" Besides the speedy vocal delivery, the real highlight is David Forcier's keys (especially on "Give It Away" and "Carry On"), which add depth to and relief from the relentless down-picked power chords. The Steve Adamyk Band are definitely in the same league as Red Dons and Marked Men, and if you're like me, consider yourself lucky to be a first-time listener. –Sean Arenas (Dirtnap, dirtnaprecs.com)

SUCTION CUPS, THE: *F#%k Like a Bunny:* 7" EP
One of the most exasperating things about the whole punk phenomenon is how quickly it became about a specific "sound" and how easily that sound was subdivided into pigeonholes that handily excised those myriad bands that didn't fit whatever predetermined criteria was being used. Me, I've always had a soft spot for the ne'er do wells that take terms like "'77 punk,' "bandana thrash," or whatever and plunks 'em on their noggin. Case in point: the band currently under scrutiny. This Deadbeats-related group of scofflaws turn in two slinky bits of noisy, sex-themed piss-takin', with the title track vacillating between swinging verses and double-time choruses, and the flip, "G-spot," opting for more of a '60s angle, including Farfisa, yet delivered in such singular fashion that it'd be hard not to be able to pick 'em out of a lineup. This is how it's done, kids. –Jimmy Alvarado (Deep Six Albatross, scottguerin@gmail.com)

SUNWYRM: *First Cycle:* CS
When they drift out into lo-fi psych space, or go mental like Endless Boogie Jr. or something (see "Licking Nectar from the Dragon's Eye" and "Ouija Baby"), I like Sunwyrm a lot. It's the too-basic stonerisms and average screaming that bog this tape down. Maybe they're going for a Puffy Areolas thing—heavy psych and hardcore, some kind of acid maniac thing. Hard to tell. These seem like early stages for them; they could arrive at the grace and power and focus of a band like Boris, or not if they don't want to. Anything could happen. –Matt Werts (What's For Breakfast, wfbrecords.com)

SUPER FM: *Fuckbird Barnacle:* CS
Amazingly put together for a band with no members I've ever heard of. To think, I was this close to dismissing the whole album because the intro resembled King Crimson's "21st Century Schizoid Man." If you stick around, you're rewarded with a healthy dose of bizarro garage psych a la early Whatever Brains or Vacation. And when I say bizarro, I mean untuned guitar solos, dollar bin guitar effects pedal showcases, and abrupt song changes. Of course, it's balanced by a superb sense of melody and flow, or else this record would be nigh unlistenable! Luckily for these guys, nigh unlistenable is my favorite genre. Highly recommended. –Bryan Static (King Pizza, kingpizzarecords.storenvy.com)

SUSAN: *Never Enough:* LP
Shimmery pop, not too garagy, not too dreamy, yet still somehow both. Shades of The Chills, Liliput, and post-punk's twee pop fringes are put to good effect on songs that pop while still maintaining subtle hints of "edge" to 'em. –Jimmy Alvarado (Volar, volarrecords.com)

TADAIMA: *Whatever Feels Good:* CS
Tadaima's brand of introspective bummer pop makes a maypole with my heartstrings. I found myself humming along at first listen then listening on repeat to let the hooks sink in. They cite Mega City Four (they cover "Start") and Going Steady as influences, and I definitely hear it in Bob Vielma's honest vocals. When he sings, "I don't want to run around. Don't give me the run around," it's impossible not to belt along. They also unleash some cathartic rage on "Ty Cobb," while "Whatever Feels Good" recalls *Blue Album*-era Weezer, with a Rivers Cuomo style fuzz solo. But it's not all sadness and soul-searching because closer "California Love" oozes positivity. This bass-less trio has delivered a killer first release. My fingers are crossed that they can eventually get together to record a full length. –Sean Arenas (Phat'n'Phunky, phatnphunky.com)

TEENAGE MOODS: *Sadness:* 7" single
This single is pop perfection. Think of Real Estate crossed with Ivy. Guitar pop with a lot of depth; the kind you can listen to over and over and it always sounds fresh. The vocals are nice and smooth in a good way, and the songs are catchy and extremely well crafted. It's the kind of music for late night drives or end of the summer evenings. The A side is nice, with its building tempos that wash away to something slightly serene. "So Low" on the B side should not be skipped over just because of its placement

on the record. Just as great as the A side. Two songs about sadness and loneliness, and yet I find myself pretty happy and believing in a world of possibility when I'm listening to this. –Matt Average (25 Diamonds, 25diamonds.com)

TENDER DEFENDER: Self-titled: 12" EP
There's really just something about Mattie Canino's voice in conjunction over that oh so distinct guitar sound. It's followed them from Latterman to Shorebirds to RVIVR and most recently here with fellow stalwarts, making up Tender Defender. I can't ever really explain it, but the melodies and rhythms that lie just underneath those near blown-out squeals—they sound kind. Maybe it's the feeling of old friends visiting: anticipation, love, hope, calm, gravity. They all mix together in this gorgeous, uncomfortable, butterflies-in-your-stomach kind of anxiety. Phil Douglas is no slouch in the singing department either; I just have spent more time listening to Canino. This record is everything you've come to expect from these music makers. Lyrics that are thrown against the same brick walls we bang our heads against just to survive every day. Bass notes that come in warm and rapid bursts. Drums that know just when to take it easy and slow it down before exploding into another heartfelt dance party. And there's a Bent Outta Shape cover mixed in there, too. Good stuff all around. –Kayla Greet (Dead Broke)

TIGERLILLIES, THE: *1234567:* CD
Lotta pop—powerpop, dream pop, twee pop—going on here. When they hit their mark, the songs are catchy without being too saccharine, spirited without being muscular. They're not always my pack o' sardines, but their efforts are well executed and make for good listening. –Jimmy Alvarado (The Tigerlillies, tigerlilliesusa.com)

TOTALLY SLOW: *Bleed Out:* LP
Are you more likely to… Get some rest than go to a show? Spend your time off with your family than go on tour? Fill the recycling bin with cat food tins than beer cans? Then you're probably a Pop-Punk Parent®, and this Totally Slow LP is definitely for you. Their first LP was a Frisbee-full of perfectly snotty and fast punk, and these North Carolina vets have beefed it up a bunch on *Bleed Out*. The production's bigger—with concrete-cutting guitars and tree-toppling drums—setting the stage for more focused songwriting, which triangulates with Hüsker Dü and Toys That Kill. It's powerful, pedal to the metal pop with a surprisingly mature bent. The lyrics nail the, "Welp, this is me… Oh, fuck. What am I doing?" feeling that has so far characterized my late thirties. Let this record sub in for that third cup of coffee next time you wake up at dawn for no good reason. It'll treat you way better. –Chris Terry (Self Aware, selfawarerecords.com)

TOYGUITAR: *Move like a Ghost:* CDEP
It's been said before and I'll repeat it here: Jack Dalrymple is a fan-fucking-tastic singer and songwriter. I've been an appreciator of his for a longtime, ever since I was a wee lad blasting One Man Army in my headphones on the way to junior high. He's a songwriting machine with an enviable work ethic (he also contributes to Swingin' Utters and Dead To Me). Now, with toyGuitar, his voice and playing are even more defined and resounding. *Move like a Ghost* follows shortly behind their infectious first LP, *In This Mess,* but these five new tunes are even stronger than the last twelve, channeling U.K. punk infused with surf. "Peach Fuzz" and "Wrong Side" recall The Adverts, while Dalrymple delivers his best Beach Boys' harmonies on "Stoned under a New Moon." Members Miles Peck (Swingin' Utters guitarist), bassist Paul Oxborrow, and drummer Rosie Gonce aren't slackers either. Together, they have miraculously written an EP with more replay value than most full lengths. –Sean Arenas (Fat Wreck)

TUBULOIDS, THE: *Getting Weird:* 12"
Damn, it's great to know that there are bands out there that still listen to their Posh Boy records! Surf punk in the vein of those great, early beach bands. Less hardcore than Night Birds and more rock'n'roll, in an Annihilation Time vein. Makes total sense that these boys are from that classic beach community of… Canada?! Even so, with spastic energy and songs about all the trashy stuff you'd expect (Kim Jong Un, partying, etc.), you can't go wrong getting weird with this 12". –Chad Williams (Beer City, beercity.com)

TURKLETONS, THE: *Fur Frontal:* 7"
After years of doing splits with other bands, The Turkletons give fans a full EP that is short and sweet, in under seven minutes. Tracks contain alternating male and female lead vocals, and topics range from people trying too hard, to being awkward with women. Liner notes include an apology for the lyrics in "You Had Me at Fuck Off Needle Dick," a song about accidentally grabbing someone's breast when going in for a drunken arm around the shoulder. "Ladykiller" is a standout track sung by Kelly Englund, and features a sweet guitar solo. If you're into cute and catchy Ramones-influenced pop punk, check this out. –Cynthia Pinedo (It's Alive, itsaliverecords.com / Rad Girlfriend, radgirlfriendrecords.storenvy.com)

TURNSPIT / J.R. FISHER: Split: 7"
The Turnspit side of this kelly green flexi single features an impassioned folk punk song that could have been plucked from a Defiance, Ohio record in 2006; the J.R. Fisher side is more like a lo-fi poppy folk that sorta reminds me of *One Foot in the Grave*-era Beck, one of his best eras. I prefer the latter. –Lyle (What's For Breakfast?, wfbrecords.com)

TURQUOISE FEELINGS: Self-titled: LP
Turquoise Feelings play a dark brand of garage punk that reminds me of the Red Dons or the Vicious, two bands that I am quite fond of. The songs drive fast, crash hard, and take off again in an auditory hit and run that will leave you wanting more. And more and more and more. –Jon Mule (Heel Turn, heelturnrecords.com)

UNIHABITABLE: Self-titled: LP
This is a crust band from North Carolina. The playing is competent, there are some good riffs, and if you've been a fan of the Catharsis/later Kakistocracy (who share members with this band)/Requiem scene, then this right up your alley. Bleak but poetic vocals, a very heavy metal influence on the guitar tone/guitar riffs/vocals, and lots of slow builds to groaning breaks fit this neatly within the confines of its genre. –Ian Wise (Dead Tank)

VANITY: *Don't Be Shy:* LP
It's great when a band feels able to flex their muscles without getting pigeonholed to a sound. This band's tremendous first LP had a real thug Skrewdriver vibe with all the hooks and chops to make it a top tenner. What was a two-piece is now a real band with Evan Radigan firmly at the helm. (His brother Brendan writes for Battle Ruins, Rival Mob, and Magic Circle amongst others if you need some background on hook writing genetics). Big Ev has taken his love for classic '80s skinhead music and mixed it up with some glam, pub rock, and English indie rock like the Stone Roses. The result? A fantastic, eclectic mix of bangers falling somewhere between the early Chiswick Records output, Creation Records, Status Quo and the very best RAC (sans the dodgy lyrics). One of my favorite records of the year, by a long way. –Tim Brooks (Katorga Works, katorgaworks.bigcartel.com)

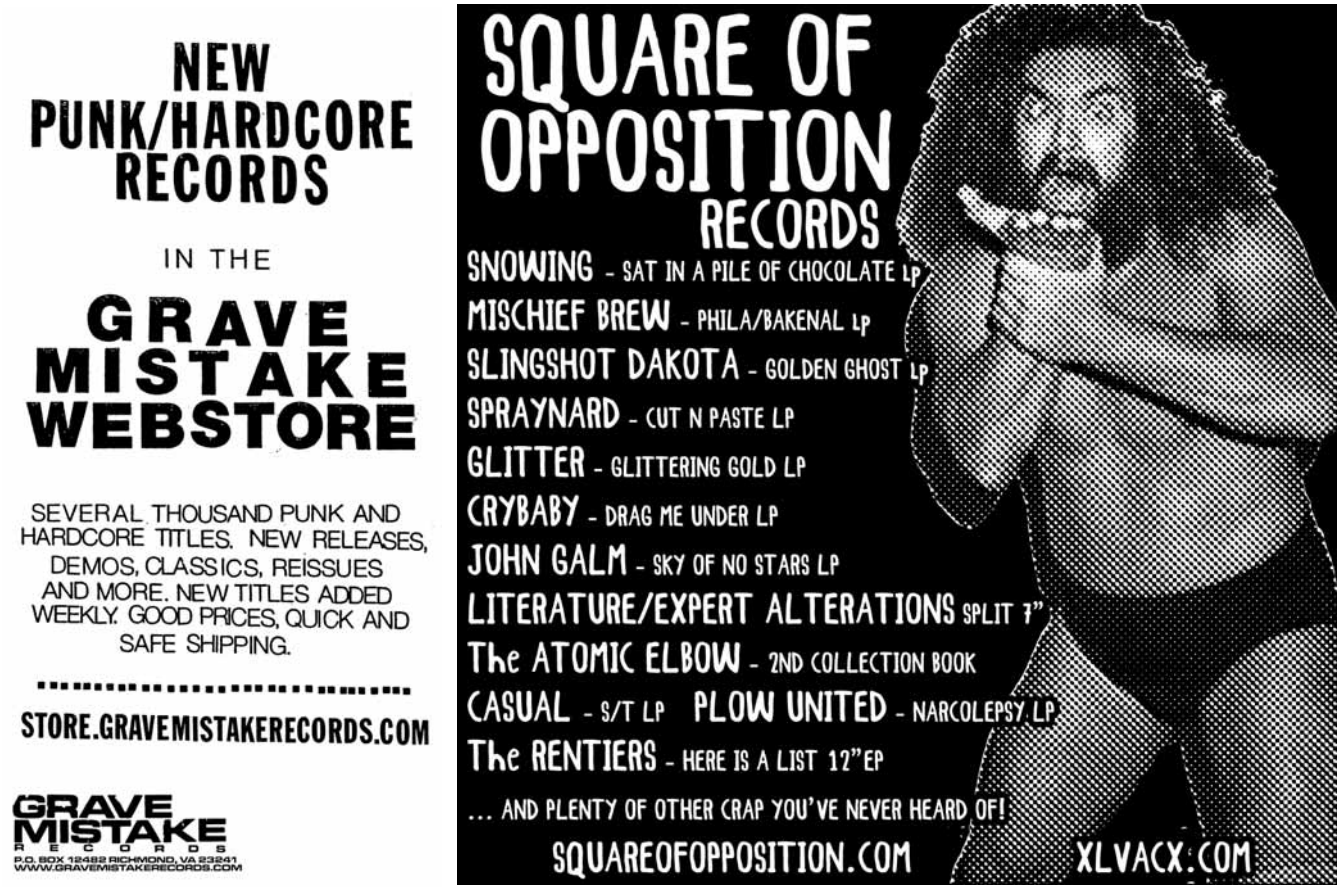
VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Killed by Meth: Rust Belt Rockers:* LP
This fantastic comp brings together a series of grossly overlooked groups from the Rust Belt. It's Trash!, based in London, Ontario, is a label to watch, as this LP is another welcome public service to those looking to discover a bunch of great current bands at the same time. I believe these songs are all demos or unreleased tracks by the acts included, with no duds in the batch. Fans of garage punk, even those in the know, will discover someone new and wonderful via this comp. It's not just the title that's clever, so seek it out before it's gone. –Art Ettinger (It's Trash!, itstrashrecords.bandcamp.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Mild in the Streets: Fat Music Unplugged:* LP
Fat Wreck Chords has given us over twenty-five years of great punk rock bands and albums. This release is a collection of acoustic songs from some of the label's contributors through the years—Tony Sly (RIP) from No Use For A Name, Joey Cape from Lagwagon, Stacey Dee from Bad Cop/Bad Cop, and thirteen other artists who have, at one time or another, recorded acoustic tracks for the label. First off, there are songs here that I love, like "Fruitless Fortunes" by Swingin' Utters and "Joy" by Against Me! But I have those tracks on other releases. I do not know who this compilation is for. It just feels awkward and unnecessary, almost forced upon the listener. I'm not sure who wants to hear an orchestral version of NOFX's 1999 release, *The Decline.* And I don't for the life of me know why Spike Slawson (Swingin' Utters, Me First And The Gimme Gimmes) has a uke-fucking-lele-themed band called Uke-Hunt that covers Olivia Newton John and Electric Light Orchestra's *Xanadu*. Fuck me, it is so bad. I hope that Fat Wreck Chords continues to push new bands like Bad Cop/Bad Cop, Night Birds, and Western Addiction. I am thankful that Fat has given me so many good times over the years. This is just not one of them. –Jon Mule (Fat)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Mild in the Streets: Fat Music Unplugged:* CD
Fat Wreck Chords shows their softer side with this comp, featuring acoustic and stripped-down songs from classic punk vocalists, such as Joey Cape of Lagwagon, and Yotam Ben Horin of Useless ID. The album title and art are a shout out to The Circle Jerks' *Wild in the Streets*, and features some of the Fat Record Store regulars. The standout track is the closing Baz And His Orchestra tribute to "The Decline"'s fifteenth anniversary. The orchestra is comprised of fifty classically trained musicians that performed the "Punk Rock Symphony," and recreate the entire NOFX EP. They hit every nuance and vocal inflection utilizing flutes and horns. It is amazing, and I wish that Disneyland would use it for a fireworks show, because it would work perfectly. Seventeen tracks, including five unreleased songs, make this a really great album to listen to when you want to relax on a drive home from work and are pissed about being stuck in traffic. The mellow songs will definitely help keep you "Mild in the Streets." –Cynthia Pinedo (Fat)

VINCAS: *Deep in the Well:* LP
Kinda boozy Southern rock that seems to think it is heavier than it is. Despite treading a well-worn path, "Blackout" gets the album off to a good-for-what-it-is start. "Murder" is the seventh track and is a nice reprieve. The vocals get lower, the bass gets deeper and more prominent, and the guitar dips into some psych-noise territory. The final track, "Lost Spectre," ends on a pretty enjoyable noise-metal instrumental note. That made me realize the vocals were really a big part of what I didn't love about this album—more songs like "Murder" and the last minute of "Lost Spectre" might help Vincas break out of stereotypical territory. – Nicole X (Learning Curve)

VOMITFACE: *Hooray for Me:* LP
Bass-heavy rock that reminds me a lot of *In Utero,* in a good way. It was



engineered by Steve Albini, so there ya' go. If this had come out in 1993 it would have been huge, but since it's 2016 it probably will only appeal to folks that miss the Pissed Jeans or attend Riot Fest, which is a shame because it should be appreciated by all the folks who buy records from Robotic Empire and followed Torche and Floor tours. I am recommending a record that doesn't sound like bandana thrash or UK82. Are you happy, Todd? –Ian Wise (Help Yourself, helpyourselfrecords.com)

WANKYS, THE: Self-titled: EP
More noise punk from this prolific outfit. Musically and lyrically, they're straight ahead and to the point. Four songs of resistance, the surveillance state, and having integrity with flanged-out, distorted guitars, no frills drums and bass, and a singer who sounds like a Muppet on crank. Of all the noisecore bands in recent years, The Wankys have stood out over most. The fact that they are still at it speaks volumes. –Matt Average (SPHC, sphc.bigcartel.com)

WAR GOES ON, THE: Self-titled: LP
It's been four years since this Danish band has released anything. Musically, this is a blend of Badtown Boys, Bad Religion, and Youth Brigade with gruff vocals that make me think of Black Dots. At times, the whole package has a streetpunk/oi quality to it but without the plodding cadence that sometimes blights that genre. The album definitely has a sense of urgency and energy. I listened to a stream of this once before putting my hand in my pocket to make a purchase. It's certainly worth every penny. –Rich Cocksedge (Adult Crash, ktown.hardcore@gmail.com, adult-crash.com)

WAVE ACTION: Self-titled: CS
Kind of Cleaners From Venus lo-fi chorus pedal post-punk, but maybe more surfy. Sometimes minimal to the point of being empty, and their lean toward traditional powerpop craft can come off too clean and studied, but at their best the songs breathe easy and bounce along. This gets better on each listen and there's a chance they're brilliant, but we may not know for sure until their next tape, or the tape after that. –Matt Werts (See My Friends, seemyfriendsrecords.com)

WEAD, THE: *By the Whey:* 7"
The back of this identifies it as recordings of an Ohio band circa 1966 and I ain't gonna argue with 'em. The title track is pure '60s garage with a vocalist who sounds like he's takin' helium shots in between. Side B's "And I and She" is a bit more jangly psychedelic akin to what one might hear in the mid-'60s with them vocals cutting right through in multi-part harmonies. –Jimmy Alvarado (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

WONK UNIT: *Mr. Splashy:* CD/LP
These Wonkers have an innate ability to tie a catchy tune to lyrics which can be humorous, daft, reflective, or damning, and sometimes a combination of any number of those. Along with that lyrical diversity, Wonk Unit is adept at offering up a variety of musical paths, be it up-tempo bangers, plaintive acoustic numbers, or anywhere in between, proof of which is to be found on *Mr. Splashy,* their sixth album. Despite the wackiness that is at the core of the band's existence, they're not one to shy away from more important issues, with the track "Bin Him" being a prime example of this. It succinctly advises anyone stuck in a misogynistic relationship to dump the person abusing them. As a contrast to that more serious approach is "Awful Jeans," a song about wearing awful jeans and bringing shame upon one's family! It's Wonk Unit's variety which I find so enjoyable, along with the fact its songs are so easy to sing along to. –Rich Cocksedge (TNS, bev@tnsrecords.co.uk, tnsrecords.co.uk / Plasterer, wonkunitband@gmail.com, wonkunit.com / Cadiz, info@cadizmusic.co.uk, cadizmusic.com)

YELLOW SNOW: *Santa Claus DWI: 7"*
Ah, Christmas music. Something I can relate to. After spending the last nine years fighting the uphill battle to make yuletide punk rock a thing, I love the fact that I have others out there to commiserate with. Yellow Snow cut right to the chase with a crazy, lo-fi, synthy cover of Alcoholics Unanimous' classic "Santa Claus DWI." It's weird as fuck and I love it. On the flip side is the instrumental version so you and your drunk ass friends can croon it out karaoke style. Another solid addition to the ever-growing legion of Christmas punkers. –Ty Stranglehold (Greasy, facebook.com/greasyrecordschicago)

YOUNG GO HARDS: *What Are You, From Here?:* CD
As a huge fan of The Smiths, I can appreciate the hell out of a crooner. There's something about being able to truly belt out a song at the top of your lungs that makes me endlessly happy. Carrying a note over several measures, albeit somewhat off key for me, is almost like hitting a hard reset in the way I enjoy music. It can feel like a detox or a cleanse—to push the outer limits of your own voice. Jill Morris, who fronts Young Go Hards, does just that. In the vein of Discount, The Lippies, and Tsunami Bomb, the vocal work is incredibly strong. Singers like Morris don't end up in punk all too often, so this is a refreshing sound, for sure. Musically, they're similar to the aforementioned bands. The dual guitars have a grit and crunch to them while also holding a bright melody throughout. Drums and bass are snappy and fast. The whole shebang is so dancey. Young Go Hards are a heartfelt inspiration to passionately go all out and to do so with a smile. I love that they have a fresh take on DIY punk music while still pushing the envelope as hard as they go. –Kayla Greet
(Self-released)

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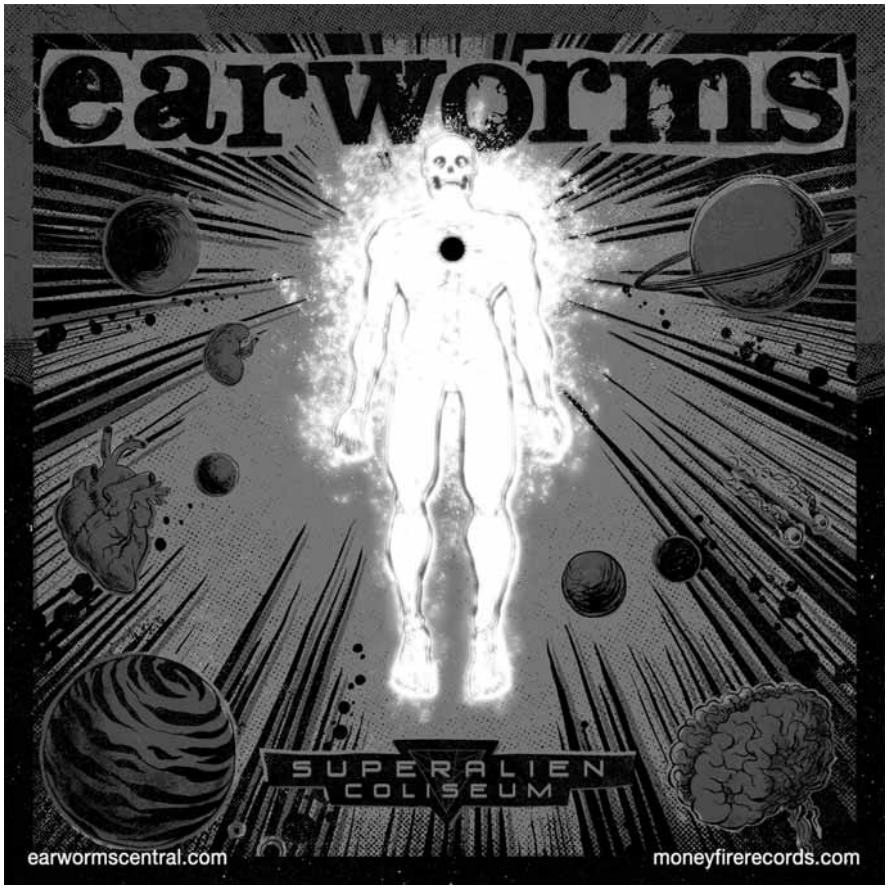

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• **86'd**, PO Box 501, E. Setauket, NY
• **Adagio 830**, Marchlewski Strasse 107, 10243 Berlin, Germany
• **Alternative Tentacles**, PO Box 419092, SF, CA 94141-9092
• **Beer City**, PO Box 1759, Milwaukee, WI 53201
• **Bitch Face**, 359 Parkdale Upper, Buffalo, NY 14213
• **Cadiz Music**, 2 Greenwich Quay, Clarence Road, London, SE8 3EY, U.K.
• **Concrete Jungle**, PO Box 810 427, 90249 Nürnberg, Germany
• **Dead Broke**, 139 Huber Ave., Holbrook, NY 11741
• **Dead Tank**, 2814 Green St., Jacksonville, FL 32205
• **Deamons**, PO Box 273, Moncton, NB, E1C 8K9 Canada
• **Deranged**, c/o Gordon Dufresne, 2700 Lower Rd., Roberts Creek, BC V0N 2W4, Canada
• **Dirt Cult**, 7930 NE Prescott St., Portland, OR 97218
• **Dirtnap**, 5857 SE Foster Rd., Portland, OR 97206
• **Do What?**, 6819 Minnesota Ave., St. Louis, MO 63111
• **Don Giovanni**, PO Box 628, Kingston, NJ 08528
• **Doubleplusgood**, 3817 Clinton Ave., MPLS, MN, 55409
• **EdTang Music**, 1277 Spruance Rd., Monterey, CA 93940
• **Fat Wreck Chords**, 2196 Palou Ave., SF, CA 94124
• **FDH** c/o Eric Hansen, 522 Hoffman St., Philadelphia, PA 19148
• **Feel It**, PO Box 25045, Richmond, VA 23260
• **Folktale**, 329 N. Burlington Ave., LA, CA 90026
• **Girth**, PO Box 13, Geneva, NY 14456
• **Gunner**, PO Box 105824, 28058 Bremen, Germany
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• **Jigsaw**, 608 NW 65th St., Seattle, WA, 98117
• **Just Because**, 3520 W. 152nd St., Cleveland, OH 44111
• **King Of The Monsters**, PO Box 38, Scottsdale, AZ 85252
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• **Moodkiller**, PO Box 27342, Seattle, WA 98165
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• **Ocelot**, 50 Terminal St., Bldg. 1, Flr. 3, Unit 15, Charlestown, MA 02129
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• **Wanda**, Michaelisstraße 49, 06618 Naumburg (Saale), Germany
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I can't feign objectivity. I love this stuff.

–Jim Joyce
LIZARD PEOPLE, DEAR READER: A DIY GUIDE TO SEARCHING FOR WEIRD SHIT

ACCOUNTABILITY PROCESSES ARE ABLEIST AS FUCK, $2, 5 ½" x 8 ½", 28 pgs.
Joe Biel writes about discovering his Asperger, a form of autism, and how it's changed the way he understands his person-to-person relationships. He breaks down the symptoms of his condition, explains how he feels some people have never given him a fair chance (see title), and shares some revealing moments from therapy sessions. As a piece of writing, it's cohesive and compelling. That said, while reading and rereading, three things kept coming to mind: the first thought being how tricky it is to write about Biel's zine without diving into the particularities of how he's possibly taken advantage of former workers and writers involved with Microcosm; the second, how the last place a guy should act in a bullying manner is in the zine scene, a space where the soft spoken and introverted go to take a break from—let us say—the assholing everyday America, where treating people fairly is the rule and not the exception; and three, perhaps most importantly, how easy it is for me to go about my day not having to navigate the difficulties of living with Asperger. In any case, you'll draw your own conclusions. –Jim Joyce (Microcosm Publishing, 2752 N Williams Ave., Portland, OR 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

BARE WITNESS, A: CONFESSION CURRENCY,
$?, 5 ¼" x 7 ¾", 14 pgs.
Performance artist Kayla Tange made this zine to document a show in which audience members anonymously wrote down their kinks and secrets. This zine stitches that performer/audience interplay into one piece with lovely layout that features confessions interspersed between transparency photos of a woman—Tange herself, I think—dressed in lingerie and a nun's habit. You can read a handwritten note about someone who used to "listen for [their] dad and step mom having sex" on one page and see a nun praying next to a dildo on the next. Tange opens *A Bare Witness* with short essay on the satisfaction that comes with being a stripper, which helps put the whole thing in context. A wild ride, for sure. Now that I'm done reading, I can mail this copy to the Vatican. –Jim Joyce (kaylatange.com)

DEMONS OF THE MIDWEST #1 and #2,
$1 each, 8 ½ " x 11", copied, 16 and 17 pgs.
Sharon and I go back a ways, but we'd fallen out of touch and only recently did I reconnect with her. Thus, I was excited to read her zine that caught me up on some recent big moments in her life. The layout is a mixture of crudely drawn (but kinda endearing) cartoons and text describing each episode. Her experiences in the past few years have been enough to last her a lifetime: her husband won a bunch of money and a trip on *Wheel of Fortune,* they got a divorce, and she had to find a roommate and learn to live again as a single person. In the midst of this she dealt with the full range of manic and depressive behavior that led to her being hospitalized on more than one occasion. While there are two separate issues of the zine here, they're meant to be read together. Although the layout wasn't always the easiest to follow, I got the idea; this is scary stuff to deal with and Sharon isn't afraid to mess up (sometimes big time). But the fact that she's sharing all of it is, I hope, a rewarding experience for her, and a hopeful one for all who read her tale. –Kurt Morris (Sharon Gissy, 5102 N. Wolcott #2, Chicago, IL 60640)

DITHERING DOODLES #17-19, $1 or trade, 5" x 8", 24 pgs.
I'm not sure anyone has properly cracked how to critique a half-diary comic/half sketch book. I'm certainly not going to be the genius who figures it out, either. Here's what I saw: inconsistent doodles, words spelled incorrectly for comic effect, stories of the banality of modern life. To say it's haphazard is giving some credit to the structure of the piece. If I sound negative, that is not how I mean it. I am neutral about the work because the work is neutral. Such a personal outing; it's as if it is a pure extension of the person who made it. To properly criticize it would be damning the person who made it, which seems against the spirit of the work. It is what it is. –Bryan Static (Steven Anderson, 259 E 700 S, SLC, UT 84111, premiumdeluxe@hotmail.com)

EVERY DAY FAILURES #1, $?, 5" x 8", 28 pgs.
This is a tough but rewarding read. It's the story of a newly single mother who was raising her two young daughters in a punk house then suddenly relocates to her aunt's house in the suburbs. What we get is a gripping tale of poverty, classism, expectations forced by others, and struggling to get by. Not only does it tackle the age-old question of, "What happens to punks when they grow older?" it gives us answers that are hard to hear and thoroughly expected. I recommend this highly if you can track down a copy. Author Sarah B. has a way of being blunt that sticks with, just like the best punk songs. –Bryan Static (Punch Drunk Press, 816 N Main #200, Lansing, KS 66043, pioneerspress.com)

FOOTSWEAT #1, $3, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 46 pgs.
In *FootSweat*, our author takes us through different snippets of times they've gone hitchhiking through Canada. I've always viewed hitchhiking as something perilous, so this zine was a step-by-step account of the strange people you can encounter, sleepless nights, roadside coffee at truck stops, and the uncomfortable physical and emotional states one can go through. Intermingled with a few train hopping stories and distant memories, *FootSweat* manages to take the reader right into the very worn shoes of one person and their tiring experiences of hitchhiking. –Tricia Ramos (FootSweat, PO Box 273, Moncton, NB ETC 8K9, Canada)

GOLDEN FOOL, THE, $?, 5 ½" x 8 ½",
gold card stock cover, printed, 44 pgs.
The Golden Fool is a collaborative poetry zine spawned after a break up and an alcohol-fueled idea. When I first got it, the coppery-gold cover and interesting drawings drew me in, but once I started reading the poetry inside, I realized it was pretty much just page after page of shock/taboo writing. Every other word or poem mentioned abuse, pain, rape, incest, blood, alcohol, masochism, et cetera. Apparently, there was also a zine release party in L.A. that featured a lot of "performance pieces," featuring needles being pulled out of faces, someone "beating the shit out of themselves," sex, fisting jars of peanut butter, and more. You know, no big deal. The whole zine plus reading an interview about the party just came off as one pretentious piece. They left me with a bad taste in my mouth, which was probably the whole point of the project. –Tricia Ramos (The Golden Fool)

LIFE WITHOUT BOOZE, $2, 4" x 6", copied, 14 pgs.
This is a pretty short zine, but it covers some important material: an addict's recovery. Taryn has some powerful things to say about her six years without alcohol and how it's changed her life in a positive way. But it hasn't always been easy for her. However, with time comes the ability to reflect on how she has grown and become a better person. What's remarkable about *Life without Booze* is how those who haven't had problems with alcohol can also gather insight from Taryn. It was wonderful to read someone else write that we have more control in our lives than we might know, that what's especially important is how we react to our challenges. This is a powerful punch of reality that deserves more than one read. Recommended. *Life without Booze* is available on Taryn's Etsy shop: ladyteeth.etsy.com. –Kurt Morris (Taryn Hipp, PO Box 542, Hilltown, PA 18927)

LIZARD PEOPLE, DEAR READER: A DIY GUIDE TO SEARCHING FOR WEIRD SHIT, $2, 2 ¾" x 4 ¼", 14pgs.
Julia Eff, Detroit's cut and paste mastermind, has the cryptozoology guide to meet every cryptid hunter's needs. For those not in the know, a cryptid is an animal whose existence is unsubstantiated. This foldout zine gives us a map of the U.S. complete with over thirty cryptids and their approximate locations. You want the Ghost Deer? Get in Jimbo's wagon and head north on the 101. Is it the Goatman ye seek? Then onto Texas, my son. Head northeast from the Lone Star State and from there and you may bag a Fouke Monster, a Wampus Cat, and a Pope Licker. Eff is here to support us in our hunt, because "cryptid-seeking can be a great way to get out of the house, and you will hopefully definitely not die" in the process. Google will tell you otherwise. But that's only because "[t]he internet clearly just wants all the creepies for themselves." I can't feign objectivity. I love this stuff. Buy it—it comes with a Bigfoot sticker. –Jim Joyce (Pioneer Press, 100 E Kansas Ave, #248 Lansing, KS 66043, pioneerspress.com)

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #399, $4.99, 8 ½" x 11", newsprint ,120pgs.
Issue 399 is an oozy boy. We get a magical trip to North Texas to get the latest what's what deets. These include: longest running venue—1919 Hemphill; place to lurk on Jeff Burke—Mad World record store; list of local bands and including one with an allusive name—Pavel Chekov. What follows is a fine as wine interview with darkrockers, Massive, and the underpass talk with Black Panties, collector of model bridges and light-up shoes. He keeps a positive attitude and gives some life advice that doubles as a how-to for solo artists who want to make young punkers slog as their backing band. Legitimately cool, sweet, and uplifting was the interview with Skate Witches, an all femme skate crew. Aside from all the me/me/me performative shit that is unavoidable with rock scenes of all kinds, the interview points out the Skate Witches' nice-as-hell community work. Namely, making skate parks and skate culture friendlier spaces for young girls who want to shred without being bro-tally intimidated. And near the end, a bittersweet piece on ABC No Rio's loss of its original location. *Maximum* gives a eulogy of sorts and graces us with pre-deconstruction day photos of the space's beautiful textures and grimy ambiance. Were there any comics in this issue? (How will my mom know it's still cool?) A toothsome read as always. Onward to #400! –Jim Joyce (MRR, PO BOX 460760, SF, CA 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

Skate Witches... making skate parks and skate culture friendlier spaces for young girls who want to shred without being bro-tally intimidated.

–Jim Joyce | MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #399

MAXIMUM ROCK'N'ROLL #400, $4.99, 8 ½" x 11", newsprint, 120 pgs.
What can one say about *Maximum Rock'n'roll* that hasn't already been said? This is issue # 400, which is truly an amazing feat for any monthly print magazine, but one that exclusively covers punk and has been doing so since the early '80s? Admirable, to say the least. One thing you can say about *MRR*, is that for better or worse, the magazine has never been stagnant—they're always attempting to progress. This issue is their annual "shitworker issue," dedicated to highlight the work of the *MRR* "shitworkers"—aka all of the people who donate their time to make the magazine happen every month. I might not relate to everything that *MRR* puts within their pages after four hundred issues in the same way as I did when I was a skateboarding punker kid in the late '80s reading *MRR* for the first time, but if you're a socially aware, politically conscious punk and you're not picking up *MRR* from time to time, then you're really missing something. –Mark Twistworthy (MRR, PO BOX 460760, SF, CA 94146, maximumrocknroll.com)

NEW WAVE CHICKEN #3, $5, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 48 pgs.
New Wave Chicken reminds me of how great zines can be. The passion that is put into this zine is obvious on every page. This isn't a graphic design masterpiece; the strength and focus is in the writing. This installment is loosely the surf issue, with articles on the music of Agent Orange, as well as an interview with Mike Palm, tales of vandalism, cock fighting, an interview with Atom Ellis who played with Link Wray, The Cars, and the Tubes, and one interview pertaining to chicken farming with Rob "The Baron" Miller from Amebix (the editor, Steve Hart, is a chicken farmer as well). There are a lot of interesting pieces in between the previously mentioned that are worth your time as well. A great zine, like a great record, makes you believe in what is going on, and inspires you to get involved. *New Wave Chicken* does just that. –Matt Average (PO Box 880081, Pukalani, HI 96788)

OH…CRACKERS! #3, $3, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 16 pgs.
Bill Hauser finally continues what he started fifteen years ago with another series of comics dedicated to taking the piss out of the punk scene. You've got Punks on Wheels ("Fighting the adult crash one washed-up ex-punk at a time"), the Poser Patrol calling kids out for wearing the wrong shoes in the mosh pit, drunk punks pooping in bathtubs, and a planet of… gasp! record collectors! Not only are these comics pitch-perfect in mocking the inanities of the punk scene (in the sort of loving way that can only be done by someone who's been there), they are rendered brilliantly in Hauser's intricate Jack Davis on speed (metal) style. Hoping I don't have to wait another fifteen years for the next issue. –MP Johnson (etsy.com/shop/BillHauserArt)

PHANTOM LIMB, $?, 3 ½" x 5 ½", copied, 30 pgs.
Phantom Limb feels like you're taking a look inside someone's diary. A perzine and collage zine, this was one of I really liked this cycle. The collages of drawings with typewritten thoughts felt very fluid and like a stream of consciousness. From their personal memories and thoughts to facts about the moon and earth's cycles and how they relate, this zine goes from one thought to the next, and features some very cool drawings. It read like sneaking a look inside someone's diary, experiencing their innermost thoughts and feelings. –Tricia Ramos (Phantom Limb, PO Box 1285, Flagstaff, AZ 86002)

TRUST #178, €3.00, 8 ½" x 11", glossy, 66 pgs.
It's another issue in this long-running German zine, and I still can't read it because I don't know German. However, from what I pieced together, there are columns, reviews, interviews, and articles. There appears to be an article about ethical consumerism and how it's not a real solution (why that article's subtitle was in English is unclear). There are interviews with Thought and Bad Press, as well as what I think is a look back at past issues of the zine. *Trust* includes a ton of zine and music reviews. Interestingly, the reviews of some zines are in English (perhaps for the sake of English readers who have sent in their zines). Whatever the case, issue #91 of *Razorcake* was called an "essential issue." Go us! Thanks *Trust!* –Kurt Morris (Trust, Postfach 11 07 62, 28087 Bremen, Germany)

XEROGRAPHY DEBT #39, $4, 5 ½" x 8 ½", printed, 68 pgs.
A self-proclaimed "Meta Zine," *Xerography Debt* is a review zine for zine readers by zine writers! The zines reviewed inside have been hand selected by the reviewers—either ones they've bought or traded. The difference between this and other zine reviews is that all the zines inside are ones the reviewers have enjoyed; with some constructive criticism but an overall enjoyment of the material. Cover and back cover were purple card stock with really cool Prince-themed drawings/homages. I would suggest this for any avid zine reader who's looking for more to read. (How many times did I say "zine" in this? Yikes.) –Tricia Ramos (Xerography Debt, PO Box 347, Glen Arm, MD 21057, leekinginc.com)

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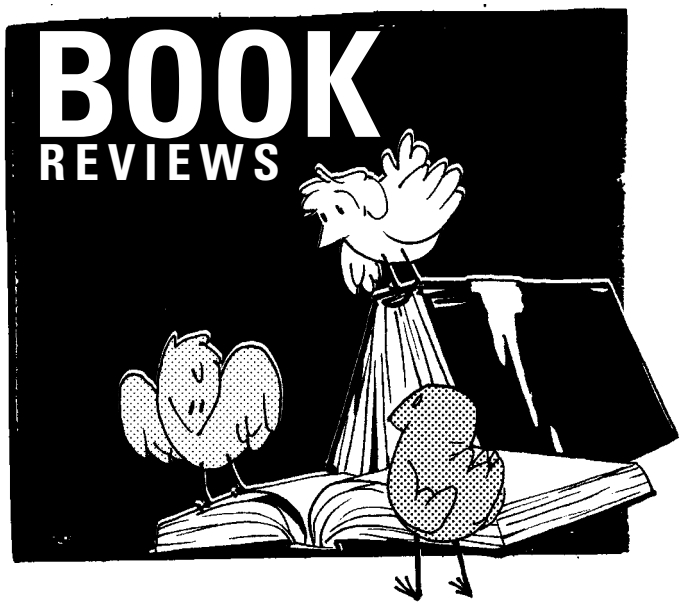

Bored Out
By Ryan Leach, 155 pgs.

Razorcake writer Ryan Leach has compiled various interviews he's done from 2005 to 2016 (some of them for this here publication) into a nice collection called *Bored Out.* Leach has some fairly specific tastes, primarily garage and punk, and these interviews focus on acts from the Memphis, L.A., New Zealand, and Austin scenes—all places where Leach has lived. There are a lot of interviews here, including Kid Congo Powers, Jeffrey Evans, Eric Friedl, Dave Alvin, and more. Some of their bands are pretty impressive: the Oblivians, the Urinals, Weirdos, Blasters, and Modern Lovers. In addition to these interviews, there are oral histories of Gun Club and the Klitz.

Bored Out succeeds because Leach knows his shit. Reading the back and forth between him and the musicians, he always keeps up with them. His interviews are regular conversations between two people who love music and are on a trip down memory lane. Leach guides the musician with a look at the progression of their career. There's no fanboy posturing or celebrity ass-kissing, just real conversations that engage and enlighten. I especially enjoyed the interviews with Eric Friedl of Goner Records and Larry Hardy of In The Red Records, as both helped me understand how these great labels emerged and how they've progressed through the years.

These interviews are a wonderful look at some more obscure bands. Even if you aren't familiar with all these musicians, it's safe to say that they've likely had a big impact on bands you know and love. If you're into this scene, this is a good compendium to check out. –Kurt Morris (Spacecase, spacecaserecords.com)

Fortress Europe (**The Big Shiny Prison Volume 2**)
By Ryan Bartek, 358 pgs.

In 2006 and 2007 Ryan Bartek traveled across the U.S. in a journalistic quest to shine some light on the soft, white underbelly of the heavy metal underground, which resulted in his self-published PDF of his journey entitled *The Big Shiny Prison.* It seems that his PDF was shared by those "in the know" and passed around like some good moonshine. Fast-forward to 2011 and Bartek decided to return to the well, this time venturing across the pond to expose the metal/punk underground of Europe. This was later distributed as a free PDF, called *Fortress Europe* and subtitled *The Big Shiny Prison Vol. 2.* In early 2016, both PDFs were printed in traditional book formats.

Fortress Europe begins with Bartek loosely outlining his objectives and itinerary, quickly pointing out that his travels will all be done with little to no money, which sets the reader's expectations for the rest of the book. Bartek's pitch is this: He plans to interview loads of people who are in the underground punk/metal scenes, but rather than the usual line of questioning one would expect, he intentionally asks his subjects questions that often have little to do with music in the conventional sense.

For the most part, I did not recognize many of the people/bands that Bartek included, though Laibach, an expatriated Texas Terri, and longtime muckraker John Sinclair were familiar names. This didn't matter to me, as some of the most interesting interviews were from some of the more unknown folks. I found these to be refreshing in that people often answered Bartek in an unvarnished manner, which revealed their feelings about broad topics like how they view America, the state of affairs wherever they lived, et cetera.

Bartek's writing style has been compared to Jack Kerouac or Hunter S. Thompson and I guess I could see that. Whether aping his heroes was intentional or not, some of his prose-y patches were compelling but did tend to feel a little clunky overall. Still, his talents are apparent and reading this put me on the lookout for *The Big Shiny Prison* as well as whatever he does next. Although not necessarily a "music" book, I would totally recommend this to anyone into underground, European metal as well as anyone interested in underground culture in general. – Garrett Barnwell (Anomie Press, bigshinyprison.com)

Generation Snow
By Robert Wildwood, 240 pgs.

Robert Wildwood's novel straddles a line between dystopian science fiction and fantasy. Set on a future earth, humankind has adapted, societally and geographically, to deal with the worldwide consequences of out-of-control global warming. The book follows Duffy Shoreman, a somewhat reticent cafe owner from the now-temperate Thunder Bay area around Ontario, Canada. He gets dragged out of his comfort zone after a mysterious set up for a crime related to aiding climate refugees heading north from the nearly uninhabitable desert areas that make up much of the United States. Meanwhile, a parallel plot unfolds as Duffy begins having dreams involving a society of evolved frogs and turtles facing a similar issue with their planet Gaeiou, which is not as far gone as earth, but is quickly coming up on its own climate catastrophe.

Bored Out succeeds because Ryan Leach knows his shit. –Kurt Morris

Wildwood excels in world-building. He quite adeptly weaves in the small, futuristic, yet believable details that make for engrossing science fiction. The near-future earth portrayed is still recognizable, but marked by advances and technologies that are just beyond the current ken of our cultural moment. My personal favorites are the "robo-chefs," which essentially handle all food service in the future, and the weapon scanners, which are included as part of the standard utilities on buildings. On Gaeiou, the highly evolved psychic cats communing with nature are particularly striking ancillary characters. Touches like these set the stage for the Philip K. Dick-style mystery that unfolds within the ever-growing conspiratorial circles that Duffy finds himself navigating, through places and concepts that are familiar yet disarmingly askew from what we, the readers, are used to in our experiences.

Where *Generation Snow* falls short is in the dialogue and plotting. Many of the characters, both on earth and Gaeiou talk in stilted patterns which are almost fatally weighed down with didactic clutter, to the point that oftentimes the characters come off more as embodied parables rather than living, breathing characters. The stiffness of the characterizations, especially of Duffy, leads to odd narrative moments, such as when he becomes the catalyst that sparks a worldwide revolution with not much more than a half-hearted speech. The sudden tumult Duffy starts comes after spending most of the book coming off as a curmudgeon longing to hang out in his cafe rather than as any kind of an inspirational figure of messianic importance. It seems the major plot movements happen in spite of rather than because of him.

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The parallel plot of the young frogs and turtles working to draw their planet to a more sustainable path fares even worse as their more mystically oriented story often brings the momentum of Duffy's adventure to a crashing halt, until the two threads finally—and confusingly—cross over during the book's climax. Wildwood is halfway towards crafting stories in the politically aware, alternate/future history vein of writers like Huxley, Dick, and Vonnegut, but needs to work at hammering out characters as believable and interesting as his worlds. –Adrian Salas (Self-published, 1225 E 11th St., Duluth, MN, 55805, robertearlwildwood@gmail.com)

Indestructible: Growing Up Queer, Cuban, and Punk in Miami
By Cristy C. Road, 96 pgs.

Of the three adjectives in the subtitle, I roughly fall in with one of them, but this short remembrance of Cristy Road's formative adolescent years is still a relatable and enjoyable read due to the basic human drives explored by the book. This publication marks the third edition of *Indestructible*, originally published in 2004. Beginning with Cristy's eleventh birthday, this collection of anecdotes and reflection goes through to the last years of her high school career. Cristy's examination of her burgeoning sexuality in these years is especially intense. While I wouldn't say my personal path is parallel in terms of the particulars, the feelings of frustration and confusion Cristy conveys in coming to a comfortable and frank place with her personal sexual identity succeeds. She makes her journey relatable in broad strokes to those of us who made it through high school while trying to negotiate our place in the world through punk lenses. An especially enjoyable bonus are the copious, dynamic, thick-lined illustrations included throughout the book, that while are distinctly identifiable as Cristy Road's work, also have enough effortless cool to pass for lost chapters of *Love & Rockets*.

As different of an experience as Cristy had from my own growing up, this quote from near the book's end cuts close to the heart of punk's appeal across boundaries about as well as anything else I've ever read: "My subculture wasn't out to prove compassion without limitations. My subculture was never perfect, but for me—it gave me that extra push." –Adrian Salas (Microcosm, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR, 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

The King of Skid Row:
John Bacich and the Twilight Years of Old Minneapolis
By James Eli Shiffer, 179 pgs.

The Minneapolis band the Gateway District was named after the Minneapolis neighborhood that served as the city's skid row from the late nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. As a city, Minneapolis is fond of demolishing any evidence that its downtown was ever home to the less-than-respectable. I lived in Minneapolis for most of the '90s, but never came across the phrase "Gateway District" until I read about the band in this magazine.

Star-Tribune reporter James Eli Shiffer interviewed, for many hours, John Bacich, Gateway District entrepreneur. After trying to run a south-of-downtown restaurant in which, literally, every employee stole from him, and after trying and failing to make a killing in California real estate, he opened a bar, a liquor store, and a "cage hotel" in the Gateway District. (Perhaps Bacich's spirits following his failures matched the spirit of the District, and that's why he set up shop there, but Bacich never really explains the why.)

The reader learns about "cage hotels" and "gandy dancers" and the origin of the phrase "skid row." *The King of Skid Row*, in its way, belongs on the shelf with such AK Press volumes as *You Can't Win* and *Sister of the Road*, and features many interesting stories, but it is a reporter's book published by a university press, and frequently cites the work of sociologists (one of whom goes balls-out to undergo the experience of being a District denizen who's arrested by the police). You won't be bored (unless you only enjoy first-person narratives), but this isn't outlaw literature.

And those interested in Minneapolis history should particularly welcome the insights into municipal corruption and its confines, to which Bacich ultimately adjusted. –Jim Woster (University of Minnesota Press, upress.umn.edu)

Making Stuff and Doing Things
Edited by Kyle Bravo 245 pgs., Revised and Updated Fourth Edition

When I was a teenager in the early 2000s, I put the first edition of this book to good use. I learned tips on sewing that I was too angsty to get from my mom, which I then put to use by altering my clothes and adhering band's patches to everything. It taught me about composting, bike repair, and how to make my own books and zines. Microcosm and CrimethInc stuff was drawing me in like moths to a flame. They kept me company when I was grounded for doing something stupid, and they kept my idle hands from doing the devil's work. I got creative and learned how to survive on a budget. If I needed something, I considered if I could make it myself first. This book was a tempered blade to keep in my arsenal of knowledge. And it kept me hungry for more skill sets and know-how.

This book was a tempered blade to keep in my arsenal of knowledge. And it kept me hungry for more skill sets and know-how.

–Kayla Greet, *Making Stuff and Doing Things,*

Though I recognize how biased of an opinion this is, I feel that my generation was the last one to truly feel the relevancy of this how-to book. At the time that I found it, my internet use was heavily rationed, with exceptions for homework research which was duly monitored by a parental figure. Today's setup is far and away different. There are ten year olds with the internet in their pockets. Punk rock constantly taught me DIY approaches to every situation, and by making stuff and doing things, I was able to critically shape my way of thinking. I still think that this book will be helpful to someone who's never even considered how to make a stencil because the need never arose. Now those same people might own their own screen-printing business.

In the age of the internet, though, this book just doesn't pack as much of a punch as it used to. Some things in here are super outdated and don't quite fit into today's zeitgeist. For example, there's a bit about making your own envelopes that suggests if you can't afford the thirty-seven cents to mail a letter, make postcards that only cost twenty-three cents to send. We're talking about a difference of fourteen cents here! Or the tip about using UV light to unstink your socks that you can wear for up to three days before they get "really crusty." Less of that and more of how to keep your socks clean so you don't start growing feet fungus, please. You can still be punk rock and take care of your body. My only other major gripe is the readability. These tips are all reprinted from various zines, of which some are hand written chicken scratch, in eight point font. So while we're making stuff and doing things, how about reformatting this book? Consistency in the text will go a long way, and you can still reprint the pages from your tattered, old zines in the back. –Kayla Greet (Microcosm, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR, 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

Manor Threat: Snakepit Comics 2013-2015
By Ben Snakepit, 285 pgs.

It saddens me to say that Ben Snakepit's loyal canine companion, Peeber, has passed away. It is however a small consolation that his wonderful dog (and friend) is so vividly documented in his daily diary comics. In the introduction of this latest collection, he writes, "I spent two decades partying, traveling, shitting my pants and passing out in a ditch." That life is behind him but he hasn't suddenly transformed into an uptight, humorless black hole.

Instead of drunken shenanigans, Snakepit grapples with buying a house in the suburbs of Texas, a new job, Karen and his struggle to get pregnant, and other adulthood dilemmas. His life may be more "adult" now, but it's all nevertheless equally captivating and mundane; the daily

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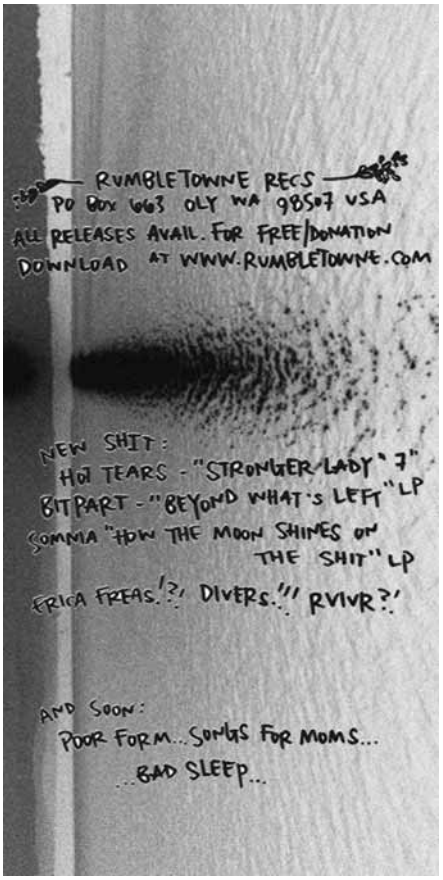

comics are addictive *because* of these relatable predicaments. As I read, I fell into a holding pattern, anxiously awaiting his next revelation: it's often something as small as pizza for dinner or wanting to know how the homebrew will taste.

He reveals so much of his personal life that bingeing his comics ultimately invites self-reflection: What have I been doing with my time? What would my life read like in comics? But even when Snakepit gets heavy, he is still the master of the human poop pile. And, for longtime readers, there's a surprise ending to this excellent collection. –Sean Arenas (Microcosm, 2752 N. Williams Ave., Portland, OR, 97227, microcosmpublishing.com)

My Damage
By Keith Morris with Jim Ruland, 284 pgs.

There are some folks who keep rocking in their older age—who would bring it hard and intense—and I would find it ridiculous and almost embarrassing. But for Keith Morris, it seems entirely natural. (For the record, we're not related.) Morris is a human sparkplug with lots of stories to share and the ability to talk a lot. Having seen video interviews, I've seen how Morris can ramble and go off on tangents. Thankfully that isn't the case with *My Damage.* I have no doubt that seasoned writer (and *Razorcake* columnist) Jim Ruland helped a great deal with having *My Damage* read as well as it does.

Morris starts at the beginning—life in Southern California and his family. It all follows a pretty typical memoir path, but it's the things not directly said that come out most fiercely. Morris's relationship with his father (from trying to understand his dad's rough lifestyle to working with him at his bait and tackle shop) are an undercurrent in the book. It's clear he's a key figure in making Morris who he is. Morris's dad is the only family member who gets much page time in the book.

From the start, Morris admits that some of his details of occurrences are fuzzy, primarily because of the copious amount of drugs and booze (or "adult beverages" as he likes to call them) he put in his system. That doesn't cause these stories to be any less interesting. It also explains why there are some large gaps between incidents. Or it could just be that those portions of his life weren't as interesting to hear about.

That said, it was occasionally difficult to put an anecdote in time. How old was Morris when X or Y occurred? What year was it? That wasn't always easy to determine. Another critique (albeit slight) is the excessive amount of names dropped throughout these pages. It was difficult to remember everyone, who was who, and how they related to one another. It doesn't help that Morris often likes to throw in random facts about a friend's sister who dated some drummer in an important band (or something like that). Then again, that's Morris for you. I can't imagine him being any other way.

These are minor quibbles and don't detract from the overall strength of the book. Keith Morris is an important person in the history of L.A. punk rock and it's good to have his side of things heard (such as issues in Black Flag and Circle Jerks). It also helped fill in the gaps as to what Morris was doing during the periods of time when his bands weren't putting out albums. After going through addictions to drugs and adult beverages, and his struggles with diabetes, it's encouraging to see someone survive and emerge with his latest project, OFF!. Keith's a survivor and his story is engaging, entertaining, and ultimately uplifting. –Kurt Morris (Da Capo, 44 Farnsworth St., Third Floor, Boston, MA 02110)

Even when Snakepit gets heavy, he is still the master of the human poop pile.

–Sean Arenas, *Manor Threat: Snakepit Comics 2013-2015*

Patricide
By D. Foy, 400 pgs.

Dang. When it comes to *Patricide,* "challenging" is an understatement.

One notable excerpt:

His father had made him hate his father so much that he hated the hating in addition to hating himself for that hating, which triple hate hurt three times as much as just hating his father alone…

Like I said, challenging.

Patricide is divided into three sections in the protagonist's life: childhood, adolescence, adulthood. He lives with his mother, father, and brothers in a seemingly normal family, though various darknesses lurk hidden in corners. His mother abuses him, his father is prone to fits of anger and violence. This is essentially a novel of a boy and his family and how they are, to some degree, at the mercy of each other. Their fears, their addictions, their anger, and later, when the protagonist, Pat, is an adult, how he moves through the world. At its core, it's a dense novel about identity, growing up, family, the notion of indebtedness to one another, and how events in our lives shape us, often irrevocably.

Unfortunately, it's also pretty exhausting. A novel made up of almost ceaseless internal dialogue. The first time Pat smokes pot (at the age of ten! A potentially incredible scene!), it takes up roughly fifty pages, yet the majority of the pages are made up of the running monologue inside Pat's head. If there's a villain of *Patricide,* it's a toss up between his father and Foy's decision to exchange narrative velocity for sometimes ceaseless, numbing internal examination. Sometimes I just found myself wishing shit would *happen* without having to read pages of the character's examinations about it, but *Patricide* is just not that kind of book. Existential crisis is god here, and we're all traveling with the author down the messy road of self-awareness.

Like I said, it's challenging, and ultimately not my type of book. Which isn't to say it's not *good*—Foy can definitely write—but unending examination of internal minutiae, purportedly the very cornerstone of the book, is also its most frustrating element. –Keith Rosson (Stalking Horse Press, 4305 Vuelta Colorada, Santa Fe, NM 87507, stalkinghorsepress.com)

Politics of Punk, The: Protest and Revolution from the Streets
By David A. Ensminger, 206 pgs.

The thought of punk-as-academic-subject makes many readers bristle. In his intro, author David Ensminger—who, in the interest of full disclosure, has contributed to *Razorcake*—notes that after years of being ignored, the deluge of books such as *The Politics of Punk* has grown, and quickly.

It's not just the size of the pile that may cause pause. The phenomenon of punk being the subject of academic study is a fraught proposition. Reducing scenes and lifestyles down to academic discourse—often unforgiving and dense—carries with it a sense of detachment, a stiff arm away from the heart into a less hearty, more chilly place.

And academia is a privilege. Not everyone can afford schooling or the time to get acquainted with the kind of language used therein.

With all this in mind, Ensminger manages to effectively straddle the line between booster and researcher in *The Politics of Punk* by keeping fans of the genre as his primary audience. Too often academic texts about punk rock spend a surfeit of their time over-explaining what even casual fans would already know by heart. Rather than regurgitating the background of every one of the zillion bands and personalities he mentions as if readers are new to the genre, Ensminger assumes that his audience is comprised of in-the-know fans, and discusses examples from a wide swath of representations of politics and sexuality in punk. In removing all but the most crucial context of his arguments, he writes in scholarly prose, but is catering his argument to punks, whether or not they have academic discourse, thus empowering those who don't approach what might otherwise be an intimidating text. *The Politics of Punk* pulls no punches, but never kowtows or talks down.

I do think that the strongest chapters here are the ones that examine their topics in the most depth. Chapters on D.C./San Francisco, M.D.C., and author Jennifer Blowdryer attack with a focus that is sometimes absent in the broader discussions of larger topics. Despite the aforementioned assumptions that readers will be familiar with the subject matter, the speed

with which Ensminger introduces and concludes his subtopics sometimes left me groping for the main thread of the argument. Despite these scattershot instances, though, *The Politics of Punk* adds to the discussion, and knits together points I hadn't previously considered. –Michael T. Fournier (Rowman and Littlefield, 4501 Forbes Blvd. Suite 200, Lanham, MD 20706)

To Make Matters Worse
By Danny Marianino, Audio Book, 2 x CD

I hate, hate, hate this. With every fiber of my being. This double CD sat at the bottom of my review pile for the longest time. Partially because the other things I was reviewing were known gems, partially because I didn't know a thing about it till I opened it. Danny Marianino is known for being the guy who laid out Danzig on video. He was the singer for a band called North Side Kings and they had some beef with Glen about set times in 2004. This video hit the internet in that sweet spot where things were just starting to go viral. The zeitgeist of the time created a perfect storm for this man's fifteen minutes of fame. Marianino has been milking this cow years after it dried up.

To be honest, this isn't even worth writing out a review for. It's certainly not worth finishing. After the author, who is also the narrator, burst into laughter after recounting a story where he sprayed diarrhea on the bathroom walls to the point where someone vomited when they went in after him, I turned this pile of shit off.

Before that though, I got to hear about this poor man's internal dilemma on whether to start an orgy with fat chicks while eating ribs, as well as when he was in Amsterdam and some guy put Marianino's beer bottle up a woman's ass while he was fucking her (his words, not mine).

It's in this strange, no man's land of offensive content where it's meant to get under the skin of the audience by being crude, as well as appealing to knuckle-dragging punk bros who still laugh at fecal matter and break all the rules. Here's an excerpt from this garbage heap: "Usually pretty girls travel in packs so I figured it was a pretty good chance I was gonna meet a sweet babe that night. Boy, was I in for a surprise. I was about to enter a plus size women's pool party. I don't know if that's an official thing, but at Brooklyn Boobs' house that fateful day, a plus size women's pool party was happening, and we were there to witness all the debauchery the girls could deliver. We were greeted by a girl that had a bathing suit on that was so large, you couldn't actually see that she was wearing bottoms."

If GG Allin were an audio book, this would be it. Stay the hell away from this. It's written by a goblin of a man. The only redeeming value I could find in it was the format. At least I could be doing something productive while I listened to this gritty lo-fi amateur recording of a worthless book. I might actually set it on fire before I throw it in the dumpster. Now I feel like I got sucker punched by Marianino, too. –Kayla Greet (Total Gavone Publishing)

Stay the hell away from this. It's written by a goblin of a man. **–Kayla Greet,** ***To Make Matters Worse***